

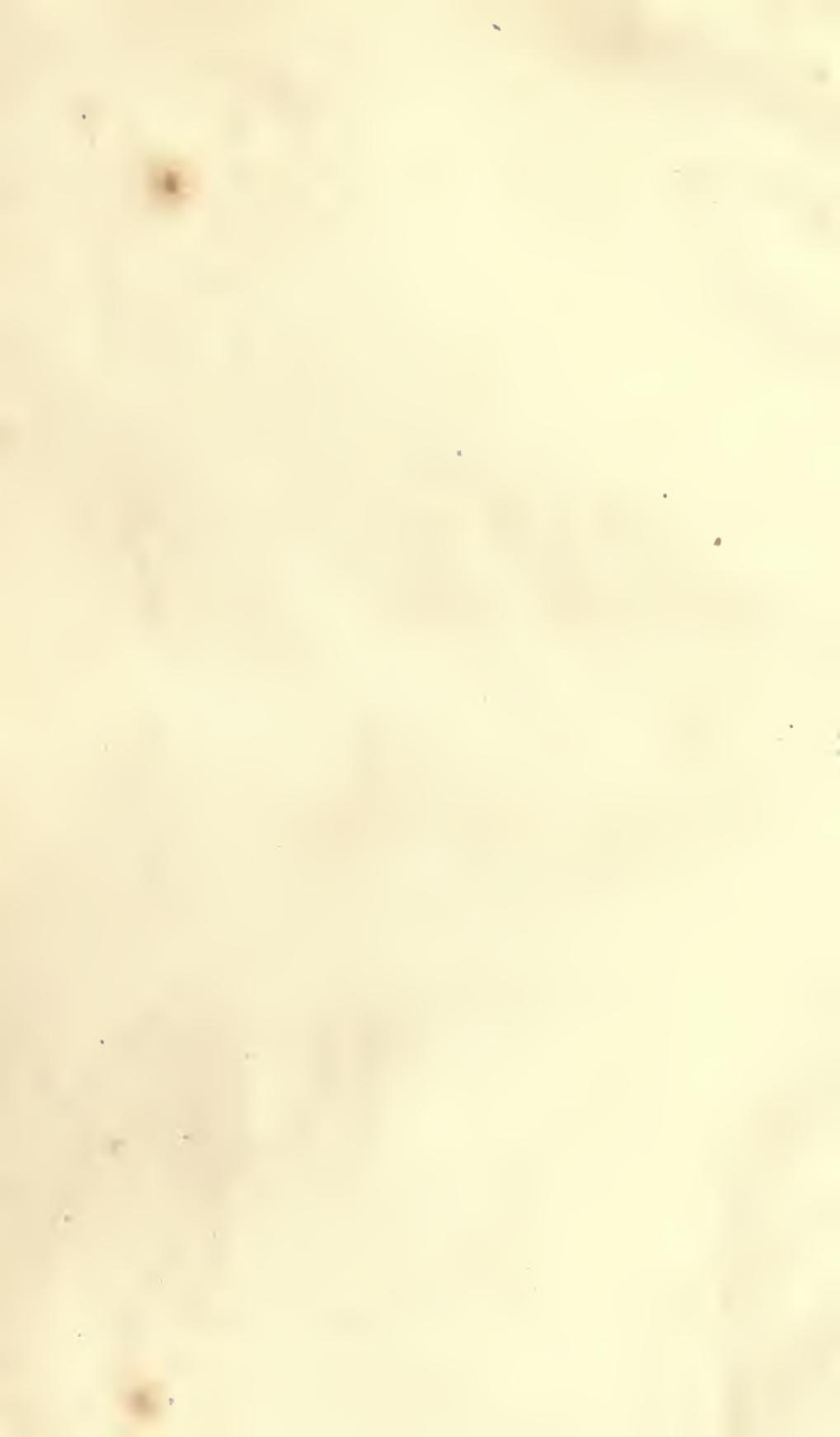
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AGNES DE MANSFELDT

A HISTORICAL TALE.

BY

THOMAS COLLEY GRATTAN.

AUTHOR OF "JACQUELINE OF HOLLAND," "THE HEIRESS OF
BRUGES," "HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS," &c. &c. &c.

"Manifold matters of recreation, policie, love adventures, &c., abundantlie
administered; and all in the golden reigne of blessed Queen Elizabeth, the sweete
floure of amiable virginitie."—*Epistle to Stow's Chronicles.*

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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AGNES DE MANSFELDT.

CHAPTER I.

IN the meanwhile the party, meant to be one of mere pleasure, moved on towards Bruhl. But how changed were the feelings of her in whose honour it was imagined, from those with which she had contemplated it a short hour before ! We have shown our heroine's presence of mind, in at once asserting her own will, in rejecting the interference of Ernest, and in escaping from the possible recurrence of its assumption. But in all this she was like a bird fluttering gracefully away from the falcon it has for a moment baffled by an ingenious turn. She trembled in her very heart, lest some new

attempt should catch her on the wing ; and she never felt secure till the carriage stopped at the palace, and the impatient elector took his place within it. Then the feeling of safety and succour, the finest test of love when in the presence of the beloved one, returned in its full force. Agnes did not attempt to analyze it, nor could she have done so if she would. It was enough that her nervous throbbing ceased. Her cheek felt warm again. Her eye wandered no more, as if in search of what it would not wish to meet. And for awhile she was as she was wont to be in Ghebhard's presence, calm, confident, and elate. She looked into the ardent expression of his face as he sat before her. She let her hand linger in his friendly pressure. She drank in his cordial greeting. All else was forgotten in that luxurious lapse of thought, in that almost lapse of feeling. Or is it that her mind was concentrated in one sensation, so strong as to merge all others in it ? No matter ! We have now no time for theories. Our heroine's

character is wound up. No check must be given to the moral mechanism that is thus set in motion.

And wild and varied is that mechanism of the human heart, self-impelled and inscrutable; acting in an eternal round of mystery, unknown even to those whose very being it regulates! The confident delight of Agnes was soon succeeded by a powerful revulsion. A flash of thought brought back the painful scene from which she had just escaped, and awoke a thousand associations which had for weeks been slumbering. A vague notion of danger, an undefined sense of guilt, took sudden possession of her mind. Her looks glanced towards the elector, and as instantly shrunk away in alarm. A delicious dread, a mingled sense of fear and happiness, next rushed upon her. Her colour came and went. Her bosom heaved. Tears started to her eyes, and as quickly ebbed back again. All was for awhile delirium. She strove but vainly to collect her scattered thoughts, and

to enter into details of self-examination. What did she indeed feel? In how far had she conceived, though worlds could not have made her utter, the sentiments of the forged letter? Had she then broken her vow so solemnly pledged, "in thought though not in deed?" What was to be the result of Ernest's visit? must she, oh, must she leave Cologne? Such were the perplexing queries forcing themselves upon her, but in vain. Mingled with them, and stifling them as they arose, was the murmured melody of the elector's voice, pouring out the ardent nothings of general conversation, all condensed into realities by the look, the tone, the gesture, which endows even commonplace with intense and solemn meaning. Ghebhard's spirits were mounted to a more than usual height. He was in that mood of warm loquacity that calls for no reply. He talked as without design. But he was all the while labouring for the consummation of a great purpose, and gaining it unknown to himself.

Agnes's heart was quite his own. He had conquered it unwittingly. It had surrendered without a summons.

There were, as the arrangements for the party have already explained, two other persons in the carriage. Duchess Anne, who sat cold and trembling by the side of Agnes, gazing in fascinated terror on Scotus who occupied with the elector the opposite places. They had assumed the bearing of persons unknown to each other. The elector was not aware of their connexion. Agnes had, at her friend's request—urged by her tyrant's orders—forborne to mention it to Ghebhard; and she was now too much absorbed in her own reflections to give any interruption to the farce of strained politeness, which Scotus carried on in his well-assumed character of a stranger to the duchess.

The distance between Cologne and Bruhl was short, but it was slowly traversed. Ghebhard had sent orders to his coachman not to hurry.

He liked his posture, placed before her he loved, her silk robe rustling at his casual touch, her warm breath almost mingling with his own, as he leaned towards her in respectful animation. An hour had nearly expired before they reached the country seat which the impassioned elector meant for an Elysium. There and then only the course of his enjoyment met a check, for he observed an air of embarrassment, and as he thought of anxiety, in Agnes. Struck by the sudden dread of illness or disquietude having assailed her, he hastily expressed his apprehensions. She was not sorry for his inquiries, for she had for some time been reflecting with reproach and pain on her hasty meeting with her brother, and her cold and haughty tone in their short conference. The habit of old usage came back in all its force ; and she had made up her mind to avow to the elector her somewhat unsisterly abandonment of her brother's society, and to request his leave to return at once to Cologne. A few sentences,

not less graceful or touching from the tone of self-accusation in which they were uttered, answered Ghebhard's questions and admitted the truth of his fears. He, with prompt gallantry entered into all Agnes's feelings, but would not hear of her closing proposition. He, on the contrary, insisted on dispatching back the carriage, with Walram and a pressing invitation for Ernest's presence. Whatever he felt of disappointment at the intrusive necessity of this measure, he did not let it mar the graciousness of his manner. The promptitude and warmth with which he made the suggestion, which in his case was a command, made Agnes thrill with new admiration and new pride—for she had already reached that pitch of attachment which makes every praiseworthy action of its object a source of self-esteem and self-applause.

The second carriage, with Nuenar and the younger members of the party, close followed the first. The groups were quickly broken into couples, as they entered the spacious and

splendid gardens, and prepared to walk—for an appetite, in the common parlance on such occasions, but some of the party gained none on this particular morning. We have said that they soon formed themselves in pairs. Needs the reader be told the names of each? One, at least, may be divined. And all who have gone this far with Ghebhard and Agnes are now prepared to follow them into the maze of winding paths ingeniously cut, for the peculiar happiness of lovers and the greater ease of their communings, through the groves which deeply bordered the gardens.

Scarcely had they entered one of those shady labyrinths, Agnes leaning on her companion's arm, and moving on resistlessly wherever he led, than she felt in redoubled force all those sensations of mingled alarm and delight which the sudden stopping of the carriage and the interchange of general conversation had for a while suppressed. The solitude, the warm air of the morning, the fragrance of flowers and

shrubs, the chirpings of birds and the hum of insects all combined to produce that voluptuous nervousness which is constitutional to early love. And, as if to give tone and harmony to all, a nightingale, untired by hours of moonlight practice—perhaps rocked to sleep on its branch and dreaming of its own melody—poured forth a thrilling strain which vibrated in Agnes's heart. Never was woman more fitly formed or placed to receive love's first confession.

Nor must it be thought that all this combination was mere chance. Ghebhard Truchses was not so young a lover as not to have calculated time, place, and circumstances for the direct avowal of his affection. He remembered well that in his boyish days, when passion ran riot in his heart, its fervid outbreak on untoward occasions had more than once perilled the success, which was after all, perhaps, mainly owing to the fiery ardour of youth. He knew himself now double the age of her who had raised this new emotion in him. He loved her

more intensely than he had ever before loved. But from thirty *downwards* (would it might be reckoned the other way !) men *calculate* in proportion to the force of their attachment. They imagine probabilities of failure which never rise on a young man's brain. He proceeds as it were by instinct, and every step he takes is rather the effect of accident than design. But they deliberate on each detail. They weigh their words. They watch for opportunities. And it is thus that so many young women, especially of my heroine's stamp, are attracted and caught, they know not why or how, and to the great wonderment of shallow observers, by suitors discrepant in various ways besides the mere disparity of years.

And to the lover who thus enters into the daring adventure, with all the odds against him, what are the chances, what the compensation ? The impetuous burst of boyish fancy is incomparably less interesting than the delicate, yet manly, march of matured passion.

Whoever has felt the first may be allowed to imagine the latter: to picture to himself the full-grown mind, with reason, taste, and sentiment united, *choosing* its object, and firmly careering on its way; each day growing bolder and tenderer, but not less wise; bringing out the development of the heart it would make its own; fostering its timid virtues, yielding to its young caprices, training its tendril fancies, losing gradually all separate identity in their clustering foliage; till at length the patron stem and the encircling parasite become as one, nourished by the same sap, and mutually supporting and embellishing each other in undivided sympathy.

Such is the progress of a successful passion between beings of unequal ages but of similar natures, undefaced by violent disputes, and those odious reconciliations, every one of which steal something from love's original stock. And if failure meets the man of mature age who ventures on the conquest of young beauty,

it comes without disgrace, for he rarely hazards by a too rapid advance the chance of too violent a check. He looks out for symptoms, and is not so blinded but that he can perceive the breakers which warn him of the rocks. Hence when he fails his rising regard is not turned to lasting hatred. No ruffian jealousy tramples out the memory of hope ; nor is wounded pride left festering into fierce revenge. He can make allowance for her who was worthy of his affection ; and he can admire and esteem even when he may not dare to love her.

For the last few weeks Ghebhard Truchses had caught casual glimpses of such a train of thought as this ; and, within a very few days of the one at which our tale has arrived, a more positive application of the general theory began to fix itself in his mind. He had, in fact, discovered the truth of his feelings for Agnes. He was convinced that he loved her, and in a way quite new to him. The conviction was exquisite, but to the highest degree per-

plexing. To be possessed by a strong passion without any direct purpose, was a curious phenomenon in such a man ; and it was natural that he should impatiently labour to define his sensations. To do this effectually it was necessary to ascertain how Agnes felt towards him ; and he had resolved to explain to her, in as far as he could himself understand it, the state of his mind. How to open the subject was the intricate point. He had fixed the time and chosen the place, and had even arranged some intended form of language ; but had it not been for the sudden arrival of Ernest de Mansfeldt and the effect it produced on Agnes, it is possible that all had been forgotten, and that the excursion to Bruhl had ended in another day of vague enjoyment, as little decisive as all those which had gone before.

A dozen times during as many minutes did the eloquent, self-confident, and hitherto undaunted elector endeavour to commence a conversation with his young and for the moment

abashed companion—but in vain. Her evident timidity gave him no courage. Nothing but the most matter-of-fact remarks, answered in congenial common-place, were exchanged between them. But a sudden reflection told Truchses he was losing precious time, and that in spite of his warning hint to Walram not to hurry on his errand, young de Mansfeldt would soon arrive, if he obeyed his summons at all.

“Yes,” exclaimed the elector, “he must soon be here!” and he involuntarily stopped as he uttered the words. Agnes, moved by an answering impulse, grasped his arm firmly, and a glance, as if imploring his protection, spoke volumes to the sensitive mind of Truchses. He seemed to read her soul’s secrets.

“ You fear his presence, then ?” said he in a tone of fervid inquiry but full of pathos, “ or at least his coming just now will be unwelcome ?”

“ I *fear* nothing now, at this moment, while you are near me,” replied Agnes, blushing

deeper and speaking more faintly at every word—"I am sure I ought not to fear, yet"—

"Yet you *do* fear—and what or whom? This unwished-for relative?—forgive me if I mistake you or"—

"No, no, not *you*," interrupted Agnes, with a look of beaming confidence. "But I dread my brother's coming. I could not resist your proffered invitation for his presence—but I should not have permitted it—I should have returned to Cologne."

"And leave me to the cruel disappointment of your absence! and change this day of promise into total gloom! By what reasoning, on what grounds can you decide thus? you answer not. I see that some more than ordinary feelings agitate you. What has been said or done? This tyrant brother is the cause of all? Tell me what it is. Am I not worthy of your confidence, of your friendship?"

"Fully, fully! oh, do not doubt my feelings towards you, nor be unjust towards *him*. He

is no tyrant. He loves me beyond all things. He was hurried away by error and by villany. I am much more to blame than he."

"Then what, what has happened between ye? Dearest Agnes, tell me! my whole happiness seems at stake, for your's is beyond doubt disturbed."

And she to whom this appeal was made, in all the deep-toned energy of truth and passion, felt as though her happiness no longer ran a risk. It was the first time the elector had ventured on the endearing familiarity of calling her simply by her name, the first in which he had even hinted that his well-being was identified with her's. The unexpected, undreamt of avowal, the sound of her name proceeding in such accents from his lips and coupled with such an epithet as he had prefixed to it, raised a turmoil of intoxicating thoughts, which left no room for fear or any ignoble misgivings. The elector held her hand with gentle force. She could not venture to look upon him, though

she longed to mark the confirming expression of his features. Yet with eyes averted and filled with luxurious tears, she thought she saw his bright and burning gaze piercing her heart's depths. She placed one hand before her swimming eyes. The other still rested in his. It was, like his, ungloved—Heaven knows by what accident—and the soft and warm return of pressure which his met sent eloquent tinglings through every nerve of his frame.

“ Oh, answer me,” continued he, and one arm wound tremblingly round her full yet taper waist. No wasp-like and whale-boned parody on woman’s fair proportions repulsed his half embrace; but the solid charms of nature’s workmanship yield to his touch, as Agnes gently shrunk away. Awakening to a sense of her situation, she exclaimed,

“ Spare me, in pity spare me! This is to you but sport—the repetition of an oft-acted scene. To me it is torture—it is the first time I have”—

She paused.

"Go on, go on, most lovely—but no, I will use no phrase that might seem flattery—this is no season for ambiguous words. It is the first time that you have—what, Agnes? Finish the utterance of that sentence. It is one of life or death to me. It is the first time you have"—

Loved! was the plainly-told but still unuttered word, implied in the gushing flood of tears, which Agnes could not and did not strive to control. The suppressed emotions of the whole morning thus found vent. She wept freely, for vanity whispered nothing to check her tears, and the increasing force of Ghebhard's firm yet respectful pressure seemed to loosen the springs from which they flowed.

And had she but looked upon his face would she have mistaken for an unworthy and vain-glorious expression the triumphant smile that lit it up? No woman ought, at any rate, to give such a construction to the inspiring yet

humble consciousness of joy, which every man must revel in in such a moment.

"Agnes," said Ghebhard, in his manliest yet mildest tone, and placing himself beside her on the bench to which she suffered him to lead her, "dearest Agnes, be calm be re-assured, You have nought ungenerous to fear from me. I ask no further words—I urge you to no confession. I affect no false humility, yet, as God may judge me, I sink with shame at my own unworthiness of all that is thus revealed to me in this rapturous moment! But still I see the truth, in wonderment and gratitude. Why, how, or wherefore I have gained this influence I ask not. But how a being like you, so sensitive, so beautiful—nay, nay, shake not your head so doubtingly, it is no flattery, it is the genuine heart that speaks—how such a one as thou art —*thou*, dearest,—may I use the tenderer word? thanks, thanks for that assuring pressure! How thou couldst so long escape whole-hearted is a marvel, only to be outdone by what I now

witness in this blessed hour. Thou lovest me, then! Yes? Is it so? Sweet hand, that speaks so to me, thus I thank you!"

And the fair member so apostrophised, the acting delegate of Agnes's inmost feelings, was pressed to the now silent but not less eloquent lips of her lover.

"Bountiful heaven!" exclaimed he again, still holding the willingly imprisoned hand as he stood upright, "what unimagined blessings have you kept in store for me! How have I deserved this? Oh, never yet—but I will, I will grow worthy of the boon. In the bright sunshine of this open morning, under this pleached dome of leaf and blossom, amidst the incense of flowers, and before nature's altar, I vow myself to the service of true virtue, in the person of this its living type! Never again shall an unworthy thought stain the mind sanctified henceforth by the breath of her pure spirit! Ah, Agnes, couldst thou but read the heart thus vowed to thee! It is all thine to do

with as thou wilt, for anything but to adore thee not. Ask not that of me. I never could unlove what I have once loved, and never loved anything as I love thee. Speak to me then—if not words, at least, in sighs. They are the soul's true eloquence. Look on me. Let those eyes shower light and dew together, that my heart may send out its fragrant thanks, like incense-breathing flowers, nourished at once by the moisture and the warmth of heaven."

The impassioned elector knelt before the idol of his devotion. His warm breath almost realized a portion of his fervid words. Agnes felt as if it came from his heart and penetrated even to her's. The elector did not venture more. The flushed cheek on which he breathed felt nothing beyond that. He dared not, whatever he might have desired, imprint a kiss on it. He trembled, but it was from fear not coldness. No pagan worshipper could have felt more intensely or more purely before the statue of his goddess. It is hard to say how much further

he might have gone, had Agnes still let her silence give new scope to his excited feelings. For silence is to the lover what darkness is to the glow-worm. But speak to the one, let in light upon the other and the ardour and the lustre is checked though not extinguished.

A prompt sense of her situation brought Agnes to herself, dried her tears, and gave her back the power of speech.

“Rise up, rise up,” said she, “you are hurried beyond what is fitting to you, and far beyond what I merit. I am covered with confusion, that you should so demean yourself to one so lowly. Pray, pray let us walk. I am now quite recovered and composed. Yet do not, I implore you, suppose that I have not felt acutely and with painful pride, every word you uttered. How little did I imagine this scene! What would I not have given to have escaped it—for your sake more than my own. You have not deserved to suffer—and alas! what else but suffering is there now for either?”

"Silence those self-accusings, sink those fears. Give hope and happiness fair play. Evil cannot come of aught in which thy virtue forms a part ; and oh, believe me, Agnes, that I shall not be henceforward all unworthy of the fellowship. I feel as though new born," answered Ghebhard.

They were again slowly walking in the sequestered alley. Agnes leant, without prudery, yet not quite firmly, on the elector's arm, which closely but still gently held her's to his side. There was in his words and manner something that subdued every discouraging feeling which she would have been glad at the moment to have strengthened. In as far as reason could act, it was repugnant to all that she listened to. She felt it to be sophistry. She saw nothing but misery, even if there was no guilt, in the passion to which the elector gave a headlong course. But there was a fascination in all he said, which paralyzed the exercise of her judgment. The frankness with which he had interpreted her

emotions, the generosity which spared her the utterance of what she could not conceal, the humility with which he spoke of himself—he, whom she looked on as so superior to all other men—all this overpowered her. Her admiration of him grew each instant stronger. But it was no matter what he might have said or done while she was in that mood. It would all have turned to his advantage. Love for another is awfully blended with self-love. Right or wrong, we are instinct with the necessity of upholding to ourselves those with whom we are compromised, and fully and deeply did Agnes feel herself committed to Truchses now. If he was generous in claiming no avowal of affection, she was honourable in admitting, both to him and to herself, that she had implied it amply. She scorned, at any consequence, to disavow the silent admission of her love, the consenting pressure of her hand. The treaty was ratified as soon as signed. She sought for no loop-hole of escape.

"New-born I would not wish you," replied she, with a faint smile, to Ghebhard's last sentence. "It was in your own natural character I knew you, and——"

Another pressure of his hand, returned by her's, filled up the pause—"and loved you" would have been added, if that hand had but a voice.

"Yes, it is as yourself, as nature and circumstances have formed you, rich in such high and bright accomplishments, that you have dazzled, delighted, and won me. Your former faults I know not. I have seen none. Henceforth I will not see them. But be unchanged. Work no forced miracle upon yourself, and fancy it my doing. Be faulty still if indeed you were so ever. Perfection would not have chosen me—and it would soon discard me, should it take the place of the more natural errors through which I have been loved and would be still."

No false shame checked our heroine as she

spoke. She was not a trifler. Having passed the limits of reserve, and being awhile hurried down the current of feeling, she gave an unrestricted flow to thoughts which were too pure to prompt concealment.

“*Thou art indeed perfection, as near as woman can be!*” exclaimed Ghebhard, “and do not women come close to it? Generous and good, without one sordid thought, and even, as thou dost now, lowering themselves to man’s level, whom nothing can raise to their’s! Oh, how far you are above us, Agnes, all thy divine sex! so far that I am lost in wonder at my ever having dared to love and hoped for a return.”

“And yet how many a time have you said this, and felt it, in the same phrase, and with all the frank sincerity I will not, cannot doubt!”

“Agnes, I dare not deceive thee if I would. I *have* loved ere now—no matter how often or how well. But never by my soul *as* I love now! If not new born, at least my nature is new moulded. All my former passions were for

myself alone—this is of thee and with thee. They could burn on for ever in a spurious light, separate and unreturned. But *this*, if not returned, could not exist. It had died in the first beam of thy perfection, had it not even then become a portion of thee, as comets absorbed by the sun still live in the very splendour which consumes them."

"It is thus I have been led captive; and thus I glory in my slavery," said Agnes, her animated looks directed fully on her companion. "This ardent language, all exaggerated as it is, has for weeks been the aliment of my heart. I have lived on it and loved it, even when it spoke not so openly of love. The noble sentiments so warmly expressed, the too flattering adulation lavished on me by a mind like your's, the ambitious hope that I *had* made an impression different from others—though Heaven can vouch how far short of *this* I had reckoned on it—all, all must be considered. If then I return the feeling I have inspired, oh, do

not deem me too easily won — too unfeminine——”

“ I cannot hear such words as these,” exclaimed the elector. “ Speak aught else and I will listen to thee for ever. Unfeminine ! Thou, a model of woman’s grace and dignity ! Too easily won ! Agnes, feel easy on that score. A passion such as mine, so felt, so urged, was irresistible. This is no conquest on my part ; view it not in such a light. It was but a pleading for mercy and for life. Enchanted by your attractions, it was I who sank captive at thy feet ; and in condescending to raise me up thou art elevated not debased.”

“ Well, well, let it be so. The gilding lightens the chain !”

“ Oh, could I but express in one large word the ample scope of my love for thee, Agnes—could I condense into one moment the age of grateful servitude I would pay thee, how would this overflowing heart be relieved ! Language may not tell, life cannot stretch far enough to

describe or to fulfil, the deep debt I owe, but never may repay thee."

"Alas, alas ! where will, where *can* all this end !" exclaimed Agnes, stopping and clasping her hands together, as though some fearful flash in far perspective had suddenly broke on her. The elector, struck like an eagle on his sunward flight, ceased at once his rhapsody, and placing his hand on his forehead as if to collect his careering thoughts, he repeated with wild emphasis the last word which fell from Agnes.

"End !" echoed he.

"Oh, yes, in what can it all end ? That is the one only question we should ask or solve. Are we not rushing on to absolute madness ? Can I, ought you, go further ? Have you forgotten your state and station, and must I not, for both our sakes, rouse you from your delusion ? Have I not now indeed violated my vow, both in thought and deed ? Ah, my brother's reproach was scarcely premature !"

"Thy brother! I had quite forgotten him," said Ghebhard, starting and looking around, as though the untoward object had burst on their solitude. "And what, then,—surely Agnes thou now needest no concealment with me? What is this mysterious pledge which he, it would seem, has so rudely recalled to thee?"

The elector made this inquiry in a tone far different from that in which he had urged his questions previous to the conversation we have imperfectly related. His mind seemed now absorbed by thoughts of much more import than any connected with Ernest de Mansfeldt. Yet he listened, though in comparative indifference for Agnes's answer.

"In truth," said she, "it was a vow more strange in the making than in the breaking. Yet having made I am guilty in having broke it; and as you were the cause—the unwitting cause—of my perjury, it is but fair that I should tell you its extent."

There was something in Agnes's manner

which proved that she did not lay great stress on her offence.

“Thou art absolved, even before confession,” said he; and despite of her anxious air and his abstraction, they exchanged a smile. Their love was too young to be so easily overcast. Hope broke at intervals through the clouds even of Agnes’s presentiment. And as for Ghebhard, there was always a rainbow in his most gloomy sky.

They continued their walk, unconscious of time and forgetful of place; and Agnes, becoming by degrees more calm and confident, related to Truchses some passages of early life between her brother Ernest and herself, which had ended in his exacting and her submitting to a solemn engagement that she was never to listen to a confession of love from any man without his consent, and never to marry during his lifetime. This strange contract between brother and sister, for he engaged on his part to observe the same conditions, had actually been

entered into. It was a somewhat boyish and a totally girlish adventure ; but Ernest was several years his sister's senior, and he had arrived at complete manhood without proposing the retraction of the puerile engagement. Even on that very morning, as has been seen, he seemed to hold to it as something sacred. It had, as has been before alluded to, exercised a considerable influence on Agnes through her earlier days, and had greatly weighed with her when she decided on becoming a canoness of Gerrishem. But little chance had it of standing an hour in the way of the real passion it was meant to check. It was only necessary for Agnes to be loved and to love, to let the spurious vow of celibacy vanish into air. During her few weeks intercourse with the elector it never rose to her thoughts. Her brother's reproach had revived its recollection. Her dread of the consequences of her new-formed attachment again made her recur to it, and a morbid feeling of self-accusal would have converted its breach into a crime ;

but it was only in the moment of violating it that she discovered its flimsy texture, and even while revealing it to Ghebhard, she in justice to her good sense felt it necessary to treat it lightly.

Not so the elector. He heard her recital in astonishment, displeasure, and jealousy. Of Agnes's entire purity he had not a shade of doubt. But there was something startling to his feelings in such a compact, forced on an innocent and unconscious girl by a brother to whom the rights of primogeniture gave such authority. A loathing of this ambiguous relative rose upon Ghebhard's mind. At the very best he considered him as a harsh selfish man, who, from some wayward sentiment difficult to define, had thrown himself and his dubious attachment on the path of his sister's happiness, and who would no doubt meddle in all ways to disturb it, if its indulgence and security interfered with his own views. It was in this mood that Ghebhard was prepared to listen to the

sequel of Agnes's "confession," which made him acquainted with the rapid and stirring scene that had passed between the brother and sister that very morning. She suppressed, however, some of the particulars, fearing that their abrupt avowal might lead to some scene of violence. She admitted that Ernest's coming to Cologne was caused by a letter calumniating and falsifying both her conduct and the elector's honour. But she said nothing of the forgery, nor did she make any allusion to Scotus. But Ghebhard heard enough to inflame him. Boiling with indignation on more accounts than one, he had begun to give utterance to his feelings, when he was disturbed by a low whistle—half shrillness, half melody—the well-known signal of his discreet valet's approach, whenever his master walked in shrubbery or reposed in bower—with a lady by his side.

" Ha, Walram ! already returned ! come forward !" cried Truchses, and his familiar was quickly before him, with obsequious air and

impassible features. A blush mantled our heroine's brow. Had she known the new comer better, she needed no emotion. He had no ears or eyes on such occasions—or at least no tongue to reveal his knowledge.

"Already?" repeated the elector; "you forgot, it seems, my bidding."

"I have been two hours absent, may it please your highness."

"Two hours!" exclaimed Truchses and Agnes together; and an exchange of glances drew the heart's blood to their cheeks.

"And the company—where are they?"

"The ladies, Count Nuenar, and Baron Ulrick, fatigued—and it may be hungry—wait breakfast in the tent, your highness."

The elector and Agnes started, and perhaps blushed again.

"And Count Mansfeldt, he has come hither?—I hope," said Truchses, the last words softening the interrogative bitterness of those which preceded them.

“ The count is in the gardens, your highness.”

Agnes cast her eyes timidly round at this reply. Truchses asked impatiently,

“ And finally, where and what doing is Count Jerome Scotus?”

“ He met me at the entrance of this grove, and has turned aside upon the terrace with Count Ernest de Mansfeldt, whom I was leading in all haste to your highness’s presence.”

“ Kind Scotus!” murmured the elector; and a speaking smile showed Walram how his “ all haste” was understood and approved. The valet resumed,

“ I trust your highness and the Countess Agnes are satisfied that it was not my fault if I made not more speed in my commission. But I thought it would have been unseemly to disturb the noble traveller while he was in communing with his host Baron Kriechlingen, and your highness’s clemency may perhaps hold me blameless if the carriage spring *did* become

loose and weak on the road, so as to cause delay in the mending and to force the coachman to proceed afterwards at a slow walk."

" 'Twas not in thy province, Walram—all is right, thou hast done well. Now hasten to announce my coming to my various guests, and say that Count Mansfeldt's arrival permits the preparations for this retarded meal to be promptly finished."

The valet disappeared. The elector then turned his whole attention to soothe and encourage his companion, whose mind was indeed disturbed by the manifold intricacies of thought and sentiment.

" Fear nothing," said he, concluding a train of reasoning whose logic came from the heart rather than the head, " I promise thee safety and well-doing throughout. I have a high purpose of happiness in my mind which nothing shall thwart or subvert. I have vowed myself to thee and am thine for ever! Let that assurance be thy shield, as thy virtue is my safeguard."

Agnes listened, but replied not. Half involuntary, half willing, she yielded her judgment for awhile to the guidance of her lover's enthusiasm. And the past, the present, and the future formed an arch of promise to her mind's eye—which was dazzled and deceived, because it *would* be so.

CHAPTER II.

BARON KRIECLINGEN, at all times an early riser, was up even sooner than usual on account of the disturbance caused in his mansion by the preparations for this excursion to Bruhl; and learning of Ernest de Mansfeldt's arrival he hastened to find him in old Spangenberg's apartment, and to force upon him all the torturing honours of hospitality and cousinship. It was with infinite difficulty that his anxious guest could lead him, and confine him, to the topic uppermost in his mind. But by degrees he gained all that the old baron himself knew as to the constant intercourse between the elector and the ladies of the family, sprinkled with some

wild and distorted notions of Scotus, in keeping with what has been long since told of the baron's early impressions about him. Ernest was not able very accurately to estimate the real character of the person, whom all his prejudices were enlisted against by Agnes's hurried denunciation, and who, in the language of his host, figured as something between a magician, a demon, and a philosopher.

"Keep clear of him, I tell you again, my young friend," growled the baron, with a roving glance, and a cautioning gesture, as though Scotus was an invisible witness of the conference or might have dropped into the room from any chink or cranny, "far wide of him, if you have any fear of hocus-pocus, or do not wish your pocket picked, or your doublet or hosen made the receptacle for stolen goods. But if you want words of wisdom, original or quoted, or if you require knowledge of aught that has passed for centuries, from an eye-witness and a shrewd memory, cultivate this count.

—He is a very devil incarnate! And now, cousin Ernest—let me call you so though I have not seen you since you were a fat, chubby, rosy-cheeked boy, though; *Potz tausend!* you are now lank, and lean, and yellow-skinned with a vengeance—now, I think, I have clearly told you what sort of a person Count Jerome Scotus is, eh?"

"I shall turn your information to account, kind kinsman, should occasion ever present itself," answered Ernest, not over pleased any more than over praised by the baron's frankness, nor greatly enlightened by the sketch thus given of the Italian's accomplishments. Before the baron had time to embarrass his guest by further explanations, the elector's messenger was announced, and his invitation duly delivered. Ernest, though glad of the invitation on various accounts, felt some repugnance to intrude himself into the party where Agnes had pretty plainly told him his presence was likely to be out of place. Kriechlingen observed his

hesitation, and took upon himself to answer for his guest.

“To be sure, to be sure, worthy Walram, my kinsman the young count will hasten to pay his dutiful respects to his highness. Come cousin Mansfeldt, don’t stand head-breaking, nor worrying your brain for fine words in which to answer the elector’s gracious summons. Your personal appearance will be the best reply—though, God’s sooth ! it will not be the worse of a little embellishing. That fustian jerkin and greasy hosen show hard riding—you did well to choose them of dust-colour—and those brown tanned boots have mud enough in every wrinkle from knee to instep to do honour to an imperial post courier. The count will be ready to take a place in his highness’s carriage, Walram, ere old Karl Kreutzer can open the postern and let it into the court-yard.”

The electoral valet (a fair German title) retired to give orders to the inferior functionary whose business it was to take care of the vehicle

and look to the *springs*—but we will not trouble our readers with the secret instructions or their particular execution.

“ Now, Ludwig,” continued the baron, addressing the fierce and grisly-looking serving-man who had done for him the clumsy work of personal attendance during some thirty or forty years, “ now get ready for Count Mansfeldt’s refreshing-bout, which he can accomplish in my closet; to lose no time, clear out the pewter basin, and fetch a double portion of soap, and lay forth a three-ell towel, quickly. *Gott in Himmel!* stir, man, stir! your limbs are as stiff and gnarled as the branches of the old elm in the orchard hedge.”

The servant hobbled away, pushed forward with one hand by his impatient master, while the other hauled out De Mansfeldt in the direction of the small and most untidy nook, which served the purposes of dressing-room and lumber-closet to the rough, though rich, owner of the mansion. Ernest’s saddle-bags were

brought up from the stable ; and a suitable change of apparel, after his ablutions were completed, metamorphosed him into the well-dressed representative of a noble house.

"Aye, now it may be fairly said you look like what you are, good cousin," said the baron, eyeing him keenly from top to toe as he came forth from the den. "That's a brave suit, and the elector looks sharp to externals let me tell you. You are marvellously changed by soap and water, Ernest, marvellously. Yet you are not the fine, good-looking boy that I knew you a dozen years ago. *Potz tausend!* I might almost fancy you were changed at nurse ! Some men require dress to do them justice ; and you I may say without flattery, are one that depends in great measure on his tailor. What a pity it is you have such a scanty growth of beard. Those lantern jaws would well become a pair of frizzled whiskers, and a full moustache would hang gracefully upon your rabbit-mouth. But never mind, you are a Mansfeldt, of many

quarterings and proud alliances to boot. Well, well, don't be so impatient," continued the plain-speaking baron, seeing that his guest was shuffling away from his compliments, " I have still a word or two to say."

His voice then sunk into the low bass of his usual whisper, and he jerked Ernest mysteriously on one side by the fillagree buttons of his doublet.

" Now you must not think that you are going to Bruhl for nothing, cousin. No, you must bear a hand in the good cause for which many of us good Lutherans and stanch reformers are at work. Count Nuenar, and myself and others are labouring night and day to purge our noble minded elector of popery and convert him to the true faith. Such an ally would be a host in the glorious struggle of Germany against the Romish idolatry. What else is it that makes me encourage his constant coming here, but the hope that my own girls and your sister, and Duchess Anne will, among themselves,

touch his highness's weak point ? All the world knows what that is, though he is an archbishop, and would be a cardinal. What else makes your pious old pastor within here write sheet after sheet of theological stuff—marvellous good it is let me tell you, for those that can understand it, but I honestly avow it makes me doze betimes—what else but to upset his highness's faith ? What do you start for—that is his faith in the damnable doctrines of the scarlet one ! What else makes us all, Nuenar and myself and the rest tolerate that devilish Italian, but our knowing that he is doing his best to pervert the elector's principles,—bounce you go again ! his *false* principles I mean—that is to subvert them I would say. Egad, I wish my nephew Ulrick was here to keep me from tripping ! But you'll see him at Bruhl—a well grown and well read youth—good looks they say run in the family cousin, in *our* branch I mean—but as to learning, Ulrick has more than his share. So now remember what I say, keep a

steady guard on yourself, and do all you can to lend your aid to the good cause."

Ernest smiled at the baron's eagerness for conversion; and the latter in an under voice continued to exhort him to exertion all the way down stairs and across the court-yard.

" Ah, cousin, cousin, think what a grand day it would be for the pure doctrines of reform if we could but hook the noble elector, my good friend, on a sound line of theology baited with a pretty girl, make him renounce the sins of celibacy, and read his recantation of popery in the arms of a wife ! What do you think of that, Ernest ? What a son-in-law, or a brother-in-law——"

" Drive on, drive on, coachman !" cried Ernest, flinging himself into the carriage ; while he felt a pang shoot from temple to temple, right through his brain. The old baron stood open-mouthed and staring wide for some seconds after the carriage disappeared ; and then returned up stairs, muttering sundry

words unintelligible to the echos of posterity.

De Mansfeldt would have gladly quitted the vehicle and walked to Bruhl, when Walram announced the breaking of the spring, so great was his impatience to arrive in time to snatch, as he still hoped, his sister from the danger revealed in Kriechlingen's last words. But the assurance that a few minutes would suffice to repair the accident, and the feeling that it would be unseemly to join such a party in such dust-covered plight (which the baron pronounced so unbecoming) decided him to wait as patiently as he could. And finally, after a good hours' delay, he found himself in the gardens of Bruhl. Under Walram's guidance (which had most assuredly led him a considerable circuit from any direct chance of breaking in on the elector and his fair companion) he proceeded towards the grove which formed the scene of Ghebhard's and Agnes's conversation, when he was met and saluted by a man of remarkable and distin-

guished mien, richly attired, and whom he took for an official personage of the elector's princely suite. Walram bowed low and passed on.

"I trust I may without offence unceremoniously address Count Mansfeldt, etiquette not being of this day's party at Bruhl," said the stranger, with an insinuating though unpleasing smile.

"And to whom am I indebted for the honour of so courteous a reception and such a frank recognition?"

"I am Count Jerome Scotus—the elector's guest, and I trust I may say his friend, deputed by his highness to receive you here, and offer my poor powers of entertainment until he and your fair sister have completed their solitary ramble in yonder wood."

Scotus paid no attention to the start with which Ernest received the announcement of his name, nor did he seem to notice the emotion betrayed by the brother at the insidious winding up of the sentence.

"I would pass on, sir, to find the Countess Agnes de Mansfeldt, and through *her* introduction see the Elector of Cologne," said Ernest, steadily moving forward.

"Excuse me, Count Mansfeldt, in saying that cannot be. Gallantry and decorum forbid."

"Sir, this ribaldry is unseemly, here or elsewhere, when the name of *my* sister is called in question. I insist on being led to the archbishop."

"Count Mansfeldt, I am not his servant—though I am willing, nay anxious, to serve *you*—to save *her*."

As Scotus spoke this sentence, which began in a haughty tone that instantly sank into one of almost servile earnestness, he laid his hand on de Mansfeldt's arm. The latter shuddered at the touch and at the piercing sternness of the Italian's glance. He felt as though riveted to the spot. The spell of old Kriechlingen's superstitious hints was on

him. He strove to shake off the double influence, and said with assumed indifference,

“The family of Mansfeldt needs no service, sir, fears no danger, and defies all slander.”

“Yet this hurried journey—this impatient haste—this nervous excitement was caused by a mere letter.”

“Which was written by—”

“Me! I confess myself the author—and deeply do I congratulate myself in the success of my stratagem.”

“Congratulate!”

“Aye, Count Mansfeldt, and you will ere long join in the feeling. I have proffered service, but I have anticipated the offer by the act.”

“Strange service this to bring me from Franconia, post-haste, by a forged libel on my sister’s honour, which you now unblushingly avow.”

"And justify. I knew you not, remember, and I felt that some most powerful inducement was required to make you act with speed and secrecy. Am I not justified by success? You are here, and your sister is not yet lost."

"Not yet! Count Scotus I lose time in this strange parley. I cannot now sift motives. I must see Agnes on the spot, wheré is she?"

"You risk nothing by listening to me and depending on her. You are either timé enough or too late. They have been alone these two hours past."

"This is too bad—it distracts me quite! oh why is not my brother Christopher here, to aid me in this perilous, this dishonouring emergency."

"Be satisfied—he is on his road."

"His road hither?"

"Yes. A counterpart of the letter which brought you is ere now in his hands in Paris.

And if he share your spirit and your sense of right he will ere long join us to effect this great deliverance."

"This is all mockery—insult almost. What right have you, sir, to mix yourself in my family affairs? What possible claim have we on a total stranger?"

"I can bear this and more, Count Mansfeldt. You are young."

"There is small difference, methinks in years between us, but even were it greater—"

Ernest's sentence was cut short by his observing the awfully strange expression of his companion's countenance, on which a smile of mingled grief, contempt, and pride struggled, or rather harmonized, with a haughty frown that seemed the type of some remote unfathomable recollection, rather than a ripple on the troubled waters of immediate thought.

Scotus took de Mansfeldt, with authoritative familiarity, under the arm, and said,

"Let's walk on this terrace awhile. Keep your mind tranquil, all is right."

Ernest made no resistance; and Walram, who had at a distance marked the scene, then, moved slowly on in search of his master.

"Count Mansfeldt," resumed Scotus, in the peculiar solemn yet not oppressive tone, which was at all times prodigiously effective with those whom he mystified and who could be played upon, "You know of course the traditional legend of your house, relating to a visit paid once at Mansfeldt, in winter, storm, and midnight, by a strange wounded man, who, succoured by the then lord of the castle, Count Polrath, the Bold, your far-back ancestor—for it was in December 1263, suddenly disappeared, without a clue to his discovery; but leaving in token of gratitude a small portrait of himself, and one of two twin brilliants of great price, which he had worn on each of his two little fingers, his only ornaments? You remember the tradition?"

"To be sure. And my sister wears the ring to this day. It has never left our family, and never shall."

"Look here," said the Italian, showing on his little finger one of several rings which habitually adorned his hands.

"That is my sister's ring," said Ernest briskly.

"Recollect, count, it had a companion" replied Scotus, calmly drawing on his glove. Ernest felt chill.

"You have seen the portrait?"

"Yes, as a boy before it was given to the King of Saxony by my father."

"Look in my face."

"The likeness is certainly strong!—You are then a descendant of that mysterious stranger?" cried Ernest, glad at having found an easy solution to the strange coincidences which were curdling his blood as they became evident.

"Resemblance to one's ancestors Count Mansfeldt, is not always confined to looks.

You, for instance, are not at all like Count Polrath the Bold ; but your voice"—this was said with emphasis, but as if the speaker thrown off his guard, was summoning up a recollection rather than striving to make an impression—“ Your voice is such that I could fancy it the very same.”

Ernest shuddered as the Italian spoke, and before he had time to recover himself, the latter hastily exclaimed,

“ Ha ! here comes the elector and Countess Agnes. Now one word more for your guidance and consideration, I have some faint power of reading men’s thoughts—I can answer for his this moment. He intends to recant his religion, renounce his state, and—marry your sister !”

A deadly paleness spread over Ernest’s face. His agitation was excessive. He could scarcely move ; and he did not even essay to speak, when Truchses came forward with an unembarrassed air leading Agnes by the hand, and cordially offering his own to his stranger-guest, as

the sister, deep blushing and painfully alive to her brother's emotion, performed the ceremony of introduction. Scotus had slipped away, and joined the tired-out expectants of breakfast, who were all assembled in a brilliantly ornamented tent, pitched for the occasion on an adjoining lawn.

CHAPTER III.

THE elector carried everything before him by the impetuous brilliancy of his manners that morning. De Mansfeldt's agitation, Agnes's anxiety, the deep suffering of Duchess Anne, and the minor disquietudes of the rest were as though swept away or levelled to a general tone of enjoyment, as Truchses gave full scope to his enthusiastic mood. Scotus, who never sought to rival his host in a display of talent, was still a powerful auxiliary when he chose to exert himself on an occasion like this ; and, thus seconded, the elector's talents for conversation were all brought into better play by the

Italian's varied knowledge and its apt illustrations.

The hours rolled rapidly over. The morning meal was long lingered at, as it had been long delayed. Many varieties of time-killing were prepared by the elector. Music was heard at intervals from recesses of the woods ; boats were waiting on the lakes, where swans and water-fowl swam gracefully or dived in sport ; wild animals, made almost tame by constant training, deer, hares, and others gamboled in recluse enclosures ; the green-houses and gardens, richly stocked with every seasonable flower and shrub, offered fragrant attractions to the straggling groups. It *was* so far a day of pleasure ; for the presiding genius was love ; and even in its fears, its misgivings—aye in its very suffering,—love's essence is enjoyment.

Ghebhard, as though satisfied that he had completed a great work, wore an air of self-content and courteous benevolence that made him show to peculiar advantage in his character

of host this day, though it all at times sat well on him. He appeared without study to divide his attentions equally among his guests. Almost all were astonished at the absence of the exclusive devotion which he generally paid to Agnes, and it was attributed to various causes by the different observers ; but with the exception of Nuenar, it excited no particular concern, for all the rest were busy in their own personal thoughts. His were fixed entirely on his favourite project of the elector's conversion. He had for some time set his hopes on Agnes being the means, through Heaven's grace, of their accomplishment. He was much puzzled and distressed by the apparent check now given to his friend's idolatry, for he had no experience of a lover's feelings, and he was too cautious to seek an explanation from others. Scotus he hated, while from the reasons betrayed by Kriechlingen, he tolerated and encouraged him : and there was no one else with whom he could venture to commune on this delicate subject.

Young Ulrick, for whom Scotus, after a few private turns in the garden, had left a clear course, pursued the advantage thus offered for his attentions to Duchess Anne. Emma followed with her eyes, and caught eagerly every movement and word of the Italian, the object of her unbounded admiration. Poor Fredolinda, neglected by her fickle cousin, found consolation in the kind sympathy of Agnes. Ernest de Mansfeldt, in a maze of anxiety, and out of his congenial sphere of privacy, was nevertheless dazzled, and in his own despite delighted, by the elector's whole bearing. But his many varieties of feeling were all fast centring to one object—the means of immediately removing Agnes from this dangerous attraction.

The repast which we call dinner, but which the Germans—a more methodical and time-keeping people—name the mid-day-meal, was, in consequence of the late breakfast, to be served an hour beyond the usual period. The interval was filled up as we have already inti-

mated, and the party being somewhat tired by their late promenades, had taken possession of one of those sloping banks which abounded in the pleasure-grounds, and seated or reclining on the grass and moss they enjoyed the delicious freshness of the air, which played through a grove of young beech-trees, that formed a shelter from the sun. Deep feeling was concealed by light talk ; and thoughts which were indelible were fluttered over by words as volant as the birds above the thinkers' heads.

The elector maintained his cautious bearing towards Agnes. He was beside her at times, apparently more by chance than by design, and he now lay near her feet, leaving her to interpret through his eyes what was passing in his heart. Ernest was a little aloof, closely watching ; and Scotus was slyly hovering about, giving to each of the party by turns a ready phrase, for his words were always to the purpose —and that was to manage all present for the furtherance of his several designs.

"That sprig of heath is a simple, and suiting ornament, fair canoness," said Truchses, as Agnes divided a small branch which she had plucked close by, and prepared to place it in her girdle.

"It is scarcely a fair specimen of the flowers of Bruhl," replied she, "but it is a great favourite of mine, and I shall keep this and cherish it, in remembrance of the place——"

"And of the day, I hope? Pray then let me beg for that portion which you seem about to cast aside. But giving away is in some cases the same as throwing away; and even in the latter sense I shall be proud to pick up a symbol of your taste, and I will take leave to bear it as a badge of my service."

"Let us all wear the heath-blossom in our hats," said Nuenar, brightening at this proof of his friend's gallantry, "so we may commemorate both this day and place, and form a new order of chivalry, whose tutelar guardian

shall be Saint Agnes, and whose grand master his highness the elector!"

"A happy thought!" exclaimed Truchses, springing up and placing the sprig which Agnes gave him, not in his hat but in his bosom. "Nuenar you have immortalized yourself by this bright notion. Come ladies all, and gentlemen, this moment shall see the creation of the order of the heath-bell. The statutes, the dignities, and the decorations shall all be regulated in fit time and place. But now for the consecration! Count Scotus, why do you look out there so intensely? Are you deaf or insensible to our chivalric proposals?"

"Not so, your highness. I hear and sympathize; and i'faith your infant institution seems not likely to want knights, if, like the ancient order of the Golden Flower founded by Sir Tristram of old—and as to the foundation of which I might be probably considered no ignorant authority—all errant adventurers be admitted. See, see, your highness, what a

goodly troop of Neophytes approach the palace gates."

As the elector and the others moved to the summit of the hillock which commanded a view of the gardens and palace, a loud flourish of trumpets and the rattle of kettle-drums was heard ; and a troop of between forty and fifty men, some mounted, some on foot, were seen moving forward in an irregular and straggling manner. As they came on in a cloud of dust, which swelled every moment as if proud of its convoy, it was impossible to distinguish who or what they were, the colours of their dress or banners, or the particular nature of their service. The elector's troops they could not be ; nor were there at that time any foreign soldiers likely to pass through his territories ; while it was certain that no deputation of his own subjects would have ventured to force themselves on his retirement.

" What band of intruders may this be ? This is an unlucky chance !" exclaimed Nuenar.

"By chivalry no!" cried Truchses; I am well pleased at the visit, be it from whom it may. I would that all mankind were witness to my happiness—but not that they knew its cause," was added in a soft murmur to Agnes, by whose side he stood. "Let the gates be opened, and the welcome given, and the tables spread! Who is there to see my words fulfilled?"

Nuenar and Leckenstein stood forward as the elector spoke. But his eye fell on Scotus, who made no offer of service, yet looked as if he wished to be employed.

"Thanks my good friends, I see that without a suite even I am in no want of servitors. Count Scotus, I will impose this office upon you. And by my troth I think you are most fit for parley with those unbidden guests, for I can fancy them nought but some troop of Italian actors, perhaps the Venetian comedians the *Gli Gelosi*, from Blois? That would be luck

indeed? You have seen that famous company, count?"

"I was present at their first night's appearance at the Hotel de Bourbon, three years back."

"And they were followed by vast crowds were they not?"

"Your highness may rest assured that six of the best preachers in your archbishopric would not succeed in drawing such an audience gratis as the *Gli Gelosi* brought together at four sous a head."

"There is no irreverence, count, in saying that the French are a people of good taste. Would that these visitors might be your clever countrymen."

"Tis little likely. So much were they alarmed at being taken prisoners by the Huguenots on their way to Paris that they have all sworn never to leave it again, as it is not to be expected that King Henry will a second time pay their ransom."

"Why no, count, if the Gondi, the Strozzi,

and it may have been the Scoti, make my royal cousin and good friend King Henry suffer at the rate of thirty thousand crowns a night at dice and primero," said Truchses, laughing.

"If princes will have pleasure they must pay for it," replied Scotus, with a sideway smile, as he bowed and walked away to execute his mission.

"Yes, these Italians have made his majesty of France know the value of their services," said Truchses.

"Their *price*," added Nuenar, "and I trust that other sovereigns will take warning by his folly, and fervently do I hope, in all due submission to your highness, that no vagabond set of trans-alpine mountebanks is now come to raise contributions on the electoral purse."

"Tut, tut, Adolphus! Let cynical and stinting economy be forgotten for to-day at least. So, here comes Walram with tidings of the strangers. In good truth that fanfare is

bravely blown ; they are no ordinary trumpeters."

" In his highness's present mood everything is harmony," said Nuenar to Leckenstein.

" Yes, he has set us all in tune ; but methinks Count Nuenar, there is one discordant chord," replied the young student, with a sly glance at de Mansfeldt, who watched nervously the elector's increased attentions to Agnes.

" He is not yet wound up, friend Ulrick. We must give him the key-note by and bye ; and it is strange if he be not then the leader of the concert."

At this moment Walram advanced in great speed, and was met by his impatient master, who asked the names and quality of the new comers.

" May it please your highness, the name given at the gate, which the porter closed firmly as the doubtful-looking troop came up the avenue—"

"He did wrong, Walram. I keep open house to-day."

"Was Prince Henry of Liegnitz—"

"And plenty of loose company in his train I warrant him. So, this is our unbidden guest is it? 'Tis well that the electoral treasury is not kept at Bruhl, or it might scarce suffice to fill the begging-box of his highness."

"Besides whom are Ritter Heinrick Von Sweinischen, Baron Koller, Herr Zirchen, and several other captains," continued the methodical valet, not noticing his master's interruptions.

"A goodly company indeed," resumed the elector. "Heaven grant that the larder be well stocked, or a miracle will be needed in favour of those hungry marauders! Back, Walram, quick, and give orders that the whole provender be put forth. Let tables be laid in the garden under the smaller tent for those captains, and a cover placed at my own for his Highness Prince Henry. Well, Count Scotus,

what says my worthy and wandering cousin of Liegnitz? you have given him prompt greeting."

" His highness's impatience would brook but small delay," replied the Italian, as he came quickly forward.

" Well, what does he want or ask?"

" Verily, his wants seem manifold—the most pressing of them being a dinner, for he swears he and his train are almost famishing. But he asks to be presented with due and decorous state—but still it would appear in unwashed dignity—to the Elector-archbishop of Cologne."

" Then my kind friend Nuenar, I must depute you to accompany back Count Scotus, in honour of this roving representative of royalty. Tell him there is neither elector nor archbishop here to-day, but that if he will stay *incog.* and *sans façon*, by any title he chooses, to dinner with Ghebhard Truchses, knight-commander of the heath-bell, he is welcome to all that hospitality and chivalry can afford him."

“Not all, I hope. Pray let me intimate that the strong box of the order forms no part of its present possessions.”

“Say what you please, Adolphus. Be as prudent as you can; but I fear I must lay my account to have *some* contributions levied on my purse. No!” continued he, as his two representatives retired to fulfil their mission. “I can have no better chance of escape than the elector-palatine, the Elector of Mayence my neighbour, or the various other princes whom this sovereign mendicant has so deeply mulcted during his many months’ rambles. You have heard of his adventures, Duchess Anne?”

“Scarcely,” replied the duchess, with a languid indifference. “Prince Henry’s quarrels with his subjects, and his being summoned to Prague by an imperial decree, reached me as common news a year ago at Coburg. His escape to Augsburg, and his visit to John Casimir at Heidelberg, were buzzed afterwards in my ears; but all such matters have been long of little at-

traction to me, as your highness may well believe."

"Remember, dear duchess, I am no more a highness to-day. A poor knight only, doing the rites of hospitality to his friends. And I know no better entertainment, had I but time before his coming, than a sketch of this wild wanderer's doings since he left Silesia, and gave a respite to his worn-out subjects. But we shall have him here instantly; and I confess myself curious to see him."

"There is no danger in him I hope, your highness?" said Emma, timidly, and with a little of her old air of not ungraceful affectation.

"Fear nothing, Emma, the elector-palatine had his teeth drawn and his claws clipped before he let him loose from Heidelberg," observed Leckenstein; and a few more questions and answers, not more complimentary than what went before, prepared the party for the approach of the strange being who formed their subject.

“Here he comes! I wonder what title he has chosen,” said the elector.

“The wild huntsman would not be amiss,” observed de Mansfeldt, endeavouring to chime in with the humour of the rest, who all looked towards the stranger.

“Or Sir Orson of the hairy coat,” exclaimed Ulrick, laughing outright; while the ladies gazed, half in wonder half in alarm; and Truchses could scarcely command a decent display of gravity.

Nuenar and Scotus now approached, ushering with great solemnity the renowned Prince of Liegnitz, and eight or ten of his followers, all like himself fit types of the strange and adventurous life they had for some time led. This principal personage of the group was a man somewhat about thirty years of age, but so disfigured by a profuse beard totally untrimmed, that it was difficult to guess accurately his standing in the world, or to form a judgment at first sight of the expression of one half of his face at least. The upper part was

coarse and unintellectual, but a bold, random glance from sharp blue eyes spoke vivacity, while a compressed and narrow brow threw a dash of fierceness to complete the picture.

A fantastically-shaped cap of some animal's skin, with a plume of many-coloured feathers was doffed as he came near, and a thick crop of curled and tangled hair looked like an under-coif of nearly the same materials as the outer covering; a cloak of fur hung loosely on one shoulder, his doublet was of leather, buttoned close to his chin and trimmed with fox-skin; his hosen were of the same stuff as the doublet, and a pair of huge unwieldy boots rolled in many wrinkles, reached half-thigh up; a rapier dangling at his side and a pair of huge pistols and a dagger stuck in his broad belt, from which hung at one side a leathern bag in shape of a purse, but looking very lank and flabby, completed his costume and accoutrements. His suite was composed of men almost all young, and none beyond the earliest verge of middle age. Reck-

less-looking fellows, who had all the air of leaders fit for some band of *condottieri*, such as were then straggling about various parts of Germany, in a vagrant search for employment or plunder.

"Most noble knight, commander of the heathbell, and in the honour of it and every other order of chivalry," said Nuenar with a most stoical steadiness of muscle, "allow me to introduce into the heart of this fair and gallant company, the high and puissant Count Grump Von Dampfnoodle, who with his band of knightly followers, seeks repose and refreshment for themselves and their steeds; but who, in consideration of the yet unendowed and infant age of the order, waive all pretence to the usual largesse accorded to errant knights and military-freebooters." This last word was merged in a whispered intimation by the speaker that he had sworn that the elector was without a single groschen in his pockets, and stipulated that no attempt at extortion was to be made.

"Fair knight," said Truchses, with a prodigious command of countenance, while the

ladies were all obliged to turn aside, and Ulrick was forced to smother his laugh behind a rose-bush, “in the name of the brotherhood and sisterhood of our young order, I bid thee and thy gentle company warm welcome, and offer thee such poor fare as we may be able to cook up in a hurry, with plenty of wine to wash away your fatigues, and drown your cares if you have any, which Heaven forfend.”

“Great commander,” replied the prince, taking up the cue of the reciprocal *incognito*, and with a free and easy adaptation of his new character, which showed he had some humour, and had not rolled over the world without gathering some of the moss of *manners* at least—“gladly do we accept this generous summons, and infinite joy has the fragrance of your kitchen communicated to our nerves olfactory, and potent flavour doth it promise to our palates. We hope the bright and beautiful portion of this goodly company will pardon our dust-covered encumbrances, and take us for what we would be rather than what we seem.”

"Your hand, sir count," said Truchses, stretching forth his own, which was heartily grasped by his guest; and a mutual look was as significant an admission of their several stations as the most formal exchange of sovereign recognition.

The elector, keeping up the mock heroic tone of ancient chivalry, presented each lady to the prince by her own proper name, except Duchess Anne, whose dignity required the substitution of some humbler title; and the male portion of the party, on either side, went through the ceremony of introduction. Various interchanges of light and lively sallies followed up the first opening of their intercourse; and even before dinner was announced the elector and his friends were satisfied that the new comer was at least a man of observation, tact, and enterprise, and that several of his followers, under rough exteriors, had the bearing of men accustomed to good company.

Prodigious execution was done at the dinner-tables. Henry of Liegnitz had no small appe-

ite, and a long ride had provoked its utmost exertions. His followers were at all times ready to do honour to such a bountiful repast, as even in the hurry of this occasion there was a certainty of being provided with at any of the elector's establishments. Wine always flowed freely wherever Truchses presided ; and long after the ladies of the party retired from the principal tent to wander in the gardens, where they were soon joined by the male portion of their company, loud laughter, songs, and boisterous talk told that the occupants of the captain's table were still engaged in their "potations pottle deep."

Agnes and her friends had been greatly amused by the strange specimen of princedom. He had all the fluent egotism of a clever and not over-delicate adventurer, and a rough and ready humour flavoured his various anecdotes, the verity of which no one thought it advisable to scrutinize. The elector, always inclined to make allowance for even great faults, and to

give more credit to even small merits, was not niggard in his applause of Prince Henry's social qualities, and evidently strove to keep down all recollections of a disparaging nature. As his hospitality was unstinted, so was his cordiality unrestrained. Whatever stains might have sullied the character of any of his guests, they were never reflected in the bearing of the host. Manners like his could not fail to produce their usual effect, even on Henry of Liegnitz; and all the better feelings of his nature were aroused in favour of the man who received him with so little guile and treated him with so much frankness.

Good cheer and old wine are amazing softeners of hearts that are often callous to mere moral agencies. But when the secret spring of feeling in the breast of a rough nature is reached in the moment of convivial confidence, there is generally an overflowing gush that carries away all ordinary selfish or sordid prepossessions. So it was on the present occasion,

as may be gathered from the following conversation, which took place between Ghebhard Truchses and his guest, when at the request of the latter they left the others for a while and straggled into one of the by-paths.

"Well, my good host, and kind compeer," said Prince Henry, "we may now at length fling aside our masquerade, and speak as becomes two independent sovereigns, hand in hand and face to face. This is a pleasant farce that we have been playing; but I much doubt if your highness, notwithstanding all your lay and theological lore, can form a notion of the serious purpose which brought me hither, or of the subject I am now about to broach?"

Ghebhard thought he could form a very shrewd guess; but he made no answer, nor did he suffer a look to escape him which might wound the feelings of his guest. He had something in his nature which prevented his accompanying even alms-giving with an air of con-

tempt; and the Prince of Liegnitz had not yet come to that.

“ Yes, by the mass!—pardon my favourite oath, though as a Lutheran I admit it does not roll glibly off my tongue—yes, my very reverend, and right hospitable archbishop-elector, and cousin, it is a matter of moment that I would now confide to you; and much it behoves you to have all your wits at work, to meet the exigency of the case.”

“ What can be the amount he means to ask for?” said Truchses to himself. “ I am ready to listen with all attention to your highness’s proposals,” said he, aloud, “ and you shall not find me niggard in proportion to my means.”

“ I am glad to hear so brave a sentiment from you cousin, for in God’s truth it is no trifling drag that will be made on your resources; but as I am not a man of many words nor a prince of false promises, I will come at once to the pith of my business with you. You have heard a great deal of me no doubt, my cousin?

Yes! and not much good, you would answer."

"I would *not* so answer, Prince Henry, even had calumny or ill nature warranted."

"You might without offending me, cousin. I have lived too long on the rinds and parings of the world's courtesy to look for the kernel now. I have from various causes, somewhat by my own fault perhaps, and not a little by the injustice of others, been forced to do many things I would rather have left undone, and I have left marks on my career that I would wish blotted out. But no matter. What is done is done. Yet some atonement for past folly may be found in present fairness. It is well bruited through Germany how I have quarrelled with my subjects, broke from the emperor's arbitration, and flung myself on the resources of my own genius. The many shifts I have made are no secret. But you have yet to learn that I have been across the frontier into France, and have engaged, head and shoulders deep, to aid

the Prince of Conti in his rebellion against King Henry."

"Indeed."

"Yes indeed, I have. My gallant force of Reitres, four thousand strong—when I succeed in raising them—shall assuredly join the Huguenot army, unless, as may be, some native German prince require my aid, and then I shall hold myself free from all foreign engagements, for one's own country is like one's flesh and blood—it must be looked to first."

"Well, prince, I will follow the good example you set me. You fairly own yourself a friend to heretics, a foe to the church, and engaged in a hostile league against my friend and ally the King of France. I cannot therefore aid your enterprize to the value of a single groschen, nor give my countenance to the raising of a man in my territory. But if a private loan for your personal purposes be needed, as far as my treasury permits you may command it."

“ The Elector of Cologne does not belie his fame. This is what I call plain speaking and fair dealing. Far different from your sneaking neighbour and fellow-dignitary of Mayence, who refused me plump, on both private and public grounds, but proffered a palty present of fifty crowns to my cavalier cavalcadour, the Ritter Sweinishen, for the sake of his father’s memory forsooth !”

“ But in other quarters you have been more lucky ?”

“ Not much more so. The spirit of generosity has left the princes but not to settle in the people. While the Count Palatine Richard of Rheinfels threw dust in my eyes with fine promises, but not a kreutzer into my purse, the beggarly burghers of Frankfort refused a small advance of four thousand crowns, though I and my train had spent all our ready cash in their town and bought goods on credit to double the amount required.”

“Unreasonable dogs!” exclaimed Truchses, with a smile.

“And the result of all is that we are now in serious straits. Were it not for two thousand crowns a month paid me by the Prince of Conti, my captains might starve and my recruits be in open mutiny. But now, by the mass! a brighter day seems dawning.”

“How is that?”

“How? Why that your highness, I know, will take us all into your service.”

“What, I, Prince Henry? I who am at peace with all men, and who, if opposed by some turbulent and obstinate subjects in my views of reform and the rooting out abuses, am nevertheless in close alliance and amity with the emperor, the pope, and all the confederate potentates of Europe! Alas, prince, you bring your gallant levies and fair offers to a bad market.”

“Alas, and alas, elector! that so noble a nature as yours should repose on such hollow

and treacherous support. There is not—and I say it on good grounds—one of those dear allies of yours who is not leagued for your ruin, as firmly as Condé, Conti and Navarre against that profligate spendthrift Henry of France. Intrigues which you are too generous to suspect and far too weak to cope with, are everywhere on foot against you. You are beset with dangers, ready to burst forth all around you. You must rouse up and meet the storm with vigour and desperation—and if you do, Henry of Liegnitz may be no mean support. Such as I am I offer myself to you, free, without cost or charge; for by the soul of honour within me I had rather fight in your cause for nothing than serve another for high pay and rich booty!"

The elector was much struck by this speech. The revelations it conveyed were startling. But he did not take it all for granted. His sanguine and confiding temperament was not prone to believe every hint of treachery, or

threat of evil ; and the authority for the present forewarning was but loose to say the best of it.

“ You are startled but not convinced, is it not so ? You would rather take me as your guide on a foray than your counsellor in a closet ? ” asked the prince, with swaggering *naïveté*.

“ In truth, prince, this matter is of such serious import that some proof must be forthcoming ere I can quite confide in your opinion.”

“ Weigh my words, then, and you will not find them light ones. I have said enough to put you on your guard. Events will soon speak trumpet-tongued to you. Be assured I have not travelled through Germany with my eyes shut nor my ears stopped—I know the truth of my statements.”

“ How could I, of all men, have provoked such falsehood and hostility ? ”

“ By being frank and friendly. You are

hated because envied—envied because talented, generous, and confiding. Wisdom sometimes speaks out of the mouths of fools as well as children. Therefore do not despise a warning which may save your sovereignty, though it proceed from one who has nearly lost his own in spite of all warning. We must talk this over at more leisure, good elector, and I stake my life on being able to give you proofs of all I have put forth, and more."

"I shall see you soon, prince?"

"Whenever you like. I must now muster my troop, ere your highness's Rhine wine oversets them quite, and proceed to Cologne, where my boats with a portion of my new levies are by this time arrived."

"You have then gathered some recruits already? Of what sort are they, prince? Raw troops or disciplined? and their creed?"

"These thick-coming questions augur at least that your highness is alive to my warning. Trust me the men I have under my orders are

of the right stamp for deeds of life and death. Two thousand veterans of bone and sinew, who have waded knee-deep in war, good christians all of them, considering all men as brothers no matter of what persuasion, and ready to cut the throats of papist or protestant impartially in honourable warfare, for whatever employer pays them best."

"A prepossessing picture, prince! and how have you disposed of this large force?"

"They are scattered in various towns along the Rhine—in pledge, since truth must out, for their keep, their clothing, and accoutrements—but ready at a day's notice to concentrate on Cologne, when the tug of war begins, and the funds for paying their debts are forthcoming."

"Enough of this for to-night, kind prince. You will come to me to-morrow at the palace? In the meanwhile you shall find no obstacle in the way of your proceedings. But what you have said is secret."

"As the grave! and now good-night!"

Finish your day of pleasure, brave archbishop.
To-morrow will be one of business."

The two sovereigns, who had thus opened a negotiation of serious purport with such small formality, soon separated. Liegnitz collected his captains, made his adieu, and wended his way towards Cologne, his trumpets sounding parting salutations to his host, whose generous farewell was not confined to words, a large donation to the adventurers proving his gratitude for their chieftain's proffered services, and giving the lie to Nuenar's niggardly provisions and provisoës.

Ghebhard Truchses possessed in an eminent degree that vigorous quality of mind which enables one to discard or fly from, for a season, a momentous train of thought, and to deliver oneself up to the temporary indulgence of another, less serious but as absorbing. He was awoke as it were, from a long dream of political security by his conversation with the Prince of Liegnitz. He saw, in a glance and to its full

extent, the possible danger of his situation, and he felt his dignity, his honour, his pride all involved in the necessity of a prompt solution of the question at stake. But he felt as keenly the force of that other involvement in which his heart's best affections were compromised. Ambition was not forgotten while love was brought to memory. But the latter was in the ascendant ; and Truchses resolved that for that night at least its paramount interests should not clash with those of any other. No sooner, therefore, had the noise of the horses' hoofs died away on the *chaussée*, and the last vibration of the trumpets were blended with the echo of that which preceded them—distance producing on sound the same effect which time does upon thought—than the elector, resuming at once his morning's character, and returning to the enjoyment of his day's chief delight, gave to all who were with him the notion of a man whose mind knew no care and whose happiness no bounds. Giving a free rein to his words, he

launched forth into a new display of conversational power, ran over in review the events of the day, sketched in lively colours—but with no tinge of gall—the manner, appearance, and character of his late guests, and completely succeeded in giving to most of those who remained the semblance, if not the complete reality, of a sympathy with all he said and felt.

The sun was now down, the evening breeze stole out to fan the drooping and drowsy flowers, the nightingales already flooded the air with melody. It was nearly time to end the too short day and return to town. Another walk into the wooded depths of the pleasure-grounds—a lingering lounge round the lake—a farewell to the sleeping swans—and it was dark.

“*Now,*” said the elector, “we are ready. Let the carriages be brought forth!”

A change in the order of the places occupied in the morning became necessary for the accommodation of de Mansfeldt. Truchses settled the matter, promptly and without consultation

with any one. He yielded his own seat to Ernest, and found for himself a ready space between the two ladies. The horses set out at a steady walk. The pitchy darkness required flambeaux-bearers in front, and they could not be out-paced. The torch-light threw its sombre colouring on the trees which lined the road, and was reflected back on the gilded ornaments of the harness and the carriage. But within the vehicle, the curtains of which were close drawn, not a single gleam could penetrate; and it might have been supposed from the deep silence there that each of its occupants slept soundly or had lost all waking consciousness in the dark depths of thought. But for two of the party, at least, there was no slumber and but little thought. Their minds, unreached by ordinary sensations, throbbed in a vague, delirious extacy—but not alas! apart from mortal feelings. The inscrutable connexion of sensation with sentiment was complete, and, for the time, indulged in all the divine purity of pas-

sion. *His* arms were clasped round her waist. *Her* burning cheek lay close to his. Lips met and lingered long together, in sacred silence. Two hearts were joined for ever by the holy import of that solemn pledge.

The carriage stopped.

“ Ha ! what ! where are we ? ” cried the elector.

“ In the court-yard of Kriechlingen House. Your highness slept,” said Scotus.

“ Thank Heaven I did not dream ! ” replied Ghebhard, promptly recovering from his trance of ecstacy ; and as the lights flared in upon the party, his eyes rested on the almost convulsed yet inexpressive face of de Mansfeldt, who seemed transfixed on the seat before him. That was a moment of triumph worth a world to a mind like that of Truchses. He said or looked nothing of what he felt. But he *laughed* deep in his heart, at the baffled brother who dared to cast a thought between him and the object of his adoration.

The leave-takings were brief. The ladies were safely deposited in the care of the old baron who waited to receive them. The elector's carriages drove rapidly off. The four female friends were soon in their separate chambers. Just as Agnes reached her's, her brother stepped across the corridor, and said, in manifest agitation,

"Now, for our interview. I would speak with you Agnes!"

"To-morrow, then, to-morrow, to-morrow," replied she, hastily escaping, without even a look accompanying her words, the last of which was cut short by the rapid closing of her door.

The elector arrived at his palace in a whirl of wild sensation. He quickly passed into his private room. He made no request, according to his wont, for Scotus's company to supper.

"Wine, Walram, wine!" were the only words he uttered. And when the obsequious valet had placed some flasks and a large goblet of Venetian glass upon the table, he silently re-

tired; nor did any call disturb him from his watch in the anti-room, till the dawn glimmered through the lofty and curtained casement.

And what a glorious night had Truchses passed, alone, enwrapped in the absorbing ardour of passion. How often did he change his posture during those delirious hours. How deeply did he quaff, how wildly calculate, how thoroughly enjoy! Throwing off his day-dress trappings, and in the freedom of his loose toilet robe, he paced the room, flung himself into a seat, or stood at intervals before the large mirror, and gazed ~~on~~ his flushed and fevered image, as though he sought for the reflection of his inmost heart.

The following translation of an almost illegible manuscript, handed down in traditional illustration of my hero's feelings and undoubtedly in his hand-writing, tells all that can be now-known of what he alone thought of and wrote of on that memorable night :—

I.

“ Yes ! ‘Twas a day of happiness, for none,
Not the most golden are without alloy ;
And through the age-like hours at times there shone
A lightning flash of most electric joy.
Oh, it is moments such as those which pay
The mortgage-debt of fate to minds like ours !
When love breaks out unhoped-for on our way,
Shaking from rainbow-coloured wings bright showers.
Even such a passion-chequered day was this,
Of tempered suffering and redeeming bliss.

II.

“ ’Twas sweet when o’er each wayward path we moved—
And wild-flowers bent, thy springy tread to meet—
Where glancing eyes just told us that we loved—
Self-speaking and self-answering ! yes, ’twas sweet,
When all was poetry in air and sky—
The wind soft murmuring in breathed rhyme
All through the beech-bough shade—by thee to lie,
Plucking the feathers from the wings of Time—
Snatching my mind’s reflection in thy looks,
As trembling stars peer into midnight brooks.

III.

“ How full my heart is of thee ! How it swells,
Big with thy memoried presence in its core !
Love’s honey oozes from its inmost cells,
And Hope’s redundant hives are flowing o’er.
My being is imbued with thee—thou art
The spirit which lightens and sublimes my clay,
The immortal essence, the diviner part,
The calm air blending with the fevered ray
That bubbles in the foam of passion’s fount—
The wreath that cools ambition’s throbbing front.

IV.

“ How much I love thee ! oh, how much, how much !
Could it be spanned by space, or weighed by words ?
My high-strung bosom bounds at the least touch
Which even the thought of thee sends through its
chords.—
The very rustling of thy light robe’s fold
Fills my whole frame with evidence of thine—
As liquid bronze, hot rushing through a mould,
Intensely images some form divine.

* * * * *

V.

“ Gone ! no, thou art not gone—I see thee still—
I feel thy warm breath far down in my breast,
Warm as I drank it in, that it might fill
Each thirsty reservoir with Passion’s zest—
When, in the parching ardour of Love’s drouth,
As the inebriate bee untiring sips,
I quaffed the nectar of thy dewy mouth,
And sighed my soul upon thy odorous lips,
And sucked such sweets as summer flowers send up
From their heart’s depths, to fill each leaf-formed cup.

CHAPTER IV.

WE would not willingly give halt or hindrance to the current of our story. But an occasional pause is required to keep the thread from tangling. We must for a moment examine the state of feeling of some of the persons of the tale, consequent upon the events of the day just described.

Scotus, who was evidently deep bent on leading the elector onwards in his career, had from the natural, or unnatural, contortion of his mind, planned a complication of causes to be brought at once into action, to hurry his intended victim into the measure most likely to

ruin him with the greatest speed. A marriage with the object of his evident passion presented itself in that sure aspect. But the Italian, knowing that Nuenar, Kriechlingen, and the rest of the reformists had also that design at heart, yet doubting their or his own influence to produce so important a decision, imagined, and as has been seen acted on, the plan of bringing one or both of Agnes's brothers to the spot, under the false belief of her dishonour, reckoning that their wounded pride, which he meant by all means to inflame, would lead them to force Truchses into the only reparation left for him to make. Personally unacquainted with those brothers, yet having treasured much of the information received as to their dispositions from the Duchess of Saxe-Coburg he trusted a good deal to his own power of moulding them more completely to his views as soon as they reached the scene of action. The sudden arrival of Ernest, before he had ample time to waylay and prepare him for a meeting with

Agnes and Ghebhard, had grievously disconcerted him, had he not profited by their incautious conference in the grove, the greater part of which he had listened to. By this means acquainted with, though not knowing the extent of, Ernest's secret sentiments for his sister, he felt obliged to meet him on another tack, and to hold forth Ghebhard's intention of marrying Agnes, (which he easily divined from some of his ecstatic words) as a matter of alarm instead of a subject of hope. By skilfully working up the incident of the family legend, and his own accidental likeness to the old portrait of which the duchess had told him, and by his bold avowal of the forgery, which Ernest's manner plainly proclaimed him to suspect if not absolutely to know, he calculated on making an impression which he never doubted being able to turn to account ; and he had taken occasion during the course of the day to impress on de Mansfeldt the absolute necessity of withdrawing Agnes from the elector's society—either by per-

suasion, stratagem, or force—knowing that her temporary loss, which he was resolved to retain the means of redeeming, would stimulate Truchses' passion a thousand fold, and hurry on the denouement which he now saw as certain. Scetus, on the watch for everything which might be turned in aid of his purpose, anxiously entered into the incident of the Prince of Liegnitz's arrival, and soon singling out Von Swheinichen as the principal personage of his suite, he did not fail to commence an intimacy with him, which he meant to follow up on a fitting opportunity.

Ernest de Mansfeldt was filled with a horror of a pious, fraternal, and nondescript mixture, on seeing as he did too clearly the style of feeling which existed between Agnes and the elector. The few concluding words of his conference with Scetus on the terrace gave him a clue, if any were wanting, to the nature of Truchses' design; and some broad hints casually thrown out by Nuenar satisfied him that

the political friends of the elector were, without a knowledge of his secret intentions, labouring hard to lead him to their accomplishment. Stanch Lutheran as he was, and overmuch as he would have rejoiced at the defection of such a man from the ranks of popery, in any other case, dearly as he loved his sister, proud as he would be of her influence in any instance but this one ; the possibility of her becoming the wife of *any one* was an idea of insupportable torment to Ernest. He, in fact, loved Agnes with a romantic intensity that yet wants a definition. Awkwardly innocent in his own heart ; filled with religion according to his notion of its excellence, harbouring no thought, no feeling, that could trench on the most perfect purity of intercourse with his beloved sister, the great object of his soul was to live with her, and for her, and to preserve her to himself. He never dreamt of harm in the pledge he induced her to exchange with him, nor was there harm in it except from the intense selfishness and narrow-

mindedness it arose from. But the man was really ignorant of what a woman's happiness might require. Totally passionless himself, he knew not the privation he was forcing her to adopt. And when the moment came which showed her as the too probable partner in an amorous engagement, his self-anguish overwhelmed every consideration of her happiness and his own honour, and he resolved at all hazards to snatch her from the fate which perilled his wayward and selfish gratification. The coarseness of his mind was exemplified in his early accusation that she had listened at Spangenberg's door. The roughness of the times had its effect even on him, in an occasional violence of expression, the utterance of an oath now and then, and such like proofs that refinement of manners had yet much progress to make. But this was compensated by a degree of frankness incompatible with the mean treacheries of a latter age. A mind of the same mould in our days would probably turn into a

course of sneaking fanaticism and subdued dishonesty.

Another subject of great agitation to Ernest was the probable arrival of his brother Christopher, which he now deprecated as much as he so lately desired it. When he only thought of removing Agnes from the danger of her intimacy with the elector, such an assistant, impetuous, resolute, and active was just what he wanted. But he also knew his brother's ambition, and had no doubt that the prospect of Agnes becoming the wife of Truchses, and thus sharing even the perilous dignity of the electoral throne, would act on him in a way the very reverse from its effects on himself. The night was therefore passed in devising plans for Agnes's removal before Christopher's arrival. But Ernest's weakness of both head and heart quite unfitted him for any enterprise requiring vigour and the possibility of stratagem. He therefore resolved to throw himself upon an alliance for this object with Scotus, but still not

a little appalled at any close connexion with so old a friend of the family as the Italian insinuated himself to be; for Ernest de Mansfeldt, like many a good reformer of the sixteenth century, still retained a strong hereditary tinge of superstition on all matters connected with demonology and witchcraft, and though not implicitly believing the supposed magical powers and supernatural endowments of his new acquaintance, he could by no means say to himself that he laughed them to scorn, or deny that their possibility proved a powerful attraction and gave the individual a strange influence over him. He had fixed with Scetus, in the course of the evening at Bruhl, a meeting for the following morning, and he felt no small relief at the latter having proposed that the Duchess of Saxe-Coburg, his own and his sister's intimate friend, should be one of the council for thwarting the elector's design and forcing Agnes to the adoption of measures for her own safety. Early therefore on the following morn-

ing he was ready dressed to repair to his appointment with the Italian, at the rear of the elector's palace, whence they were to proceed to the private entrance of the gardens of Kriechlingen House to meet the duchess, prepared by Scotus to expect them. Devoutly did Ernest pray to Heaven for aid in his purpose, and most conscientiously had he wound himself up to the belief that his own selfishness had no weight in, but that his sister's safety was the sole inspiration of, his prayers ; when, to his infinite astonishment a knock at his door was followed by a request for admittance, in Agnes's well-known voice.

He felt a throb of delight, as though Heaven had delivered her into his hands ; but this was as quickly succeeded by a pang of fear, lest she had come to announce a decision hostile and perhaps destructive to his projects. Ernest had no self-confidence, no reliance on his own resources. Weak and impious appeals to Heaven, in all cases right or wrong, are the

only shifts of a mind that cannot in common emergency aid itself. Heaven alone therefore knows what might have been the brother's new form of prayer, on this doubt as to his sister's feelings, had she not put an end to his apprehensions by a frank and brief avowal of them.

"You must not be surprised at my thus coming to return your visit, Ernest," said Agnes, striving to look composed and to speak cheerfully, "I only hope this interview will be more satisfactory than the last."

"Dear sister, you look wretchedly ill. Those swollen eyes and pale cheeks tell me that you have passed a sleepless night. Ah, Agnes, it is virtue alone that brings happiness. Suffering is sure to follow—"

Guilt would have completed this profound moral axiom had not the eyes of Agnes, all tear-swollen as they were, and the flush of pride on those pale cheeks repelled the half-uttered insult.

"I would not offend you, sister. I would solace your regret and save you from danger. My duty and my love combine to dictate words and actions which have only your well-being for their object."

"Ernest, pray spare me an argument or a sermon. I need neither. I am quite alive to my own situation, and prepared to act up to my own consciousness of right. I have resolved to leave this place forthwith. Are you ready to accompany me?"

"Ready! oh yes, to fly, instantly. We shall go together to Mansfeldt, is it not so my sister?"

"I am resolved to return to my convent. There alone I shall feel safe from my own thoughts."

"Wherever thou wilt, so as that thou quit the temptations which beset thee here. Oh, Agnes, what a weight is thus removed from my heart."

"To be added perhaps to the burthen that oppresses mine."

"Art thou not then happy in this resolution?"

"Miserable! If not there were no merit in it, and methinks I deserve some."

"What must I understand by that?"

"What thou wilt, Ernest. It is enough for me that I know my own suffering, in taking this step to save a noble heart from the ruin it was prepared to rush into."

"What then, my sister, has he avowed his whole purpose, and hadst thou really strength of mind to resist so brilliant a proposal? and has our solemn vow restrained thee? Dearest Agnes, this is more than I dared to hope."

"So Heaven be my help, I know not your meaning, Ernest! Can you venture to suppose that the elector would suggest or I suffer a direct proposal of dishonour? And can the word *brilliant* apply to such?"

"You misconceive me, sister—or I spoke

without clearness—my feelings agitate me—I meant to say—" stammered forth de Mansfeldt, who was convinced that Truchses had not actually announced the intention vouched for by Scotus of a proposed union, which he dreaded that Agnes might be tempted to accede to.

"Your meaning or its imperfect expression is now not important. I am acting from no impulse but that of duty to one who deserves my highest admiration and gratitude," said Agnes, haughtily interrupting Ernest, for she began to despise and almost dislike him. The act of communicating their secret to another had, without any spoken comment from the third person, almost magically opened her mind to the tyrannical selfishness which it arose from, and to her own weakness in being led to join in it. She was mortified at and ashamed of her share in this puerile pledge, and naturally enough threw her self-reproach into the scale which was already heavy laden

with that which she flung upon her accomplice. His allusion to this vow seemed quite contemptible, at the very moment when the highest motives of self-denial and consideration for the elector's welfare had alone decided her to withdraw herself from the encouragement of his infatuated, but on that account more flattering, attachment.

To do thorough justice to our heroine it must be understood that she was actuated by the fear of danger to her own reputation, or by a dread of her own suffering, in a very faint proportion to the apprehension of ruin to the elector's peace of mind, were she not at once to check the passion she had inspired. She had a firm confidence in herself; and even in the least equivocal moment of the preceding day she instinctively saw and felt with the precision which never fails a woman, that the most profound respect blended with her lover's rapture. She was right, although she knew not that it was the fixed design of making her

his own by the holiest rites of religion, at the risk or even the sacrifice of rank, state and every consideration of worldly interest, that had worked that effect upon him. She was convinced that a passion so deeply felt and so impetuously persevered in must lead to the neglect of all those temporal and religious duties and interests involved in the elector's station. That any purpose beyond its platonic indulgence was to be accomplished she never imagined. The forfeiture of her own honour, or the renunciation of his religion never flashed across her mind. And either one or the other was essential to the result which is the overwhelming impulse with one sex, and the admitted but uninfluencing consequence to the other.

Agnes therefore felt that she had but to fly; fervently believing that when once she was removed the elector's elastic nature would soon recover the shock of losing her, and that a thousand resources would soon offer themselves

to a mind so rich in that finest of all possessions — the power of bearing up against ill, by a prompt adaptation of what is to be obtained of good. The night on which this resolution was formed was one of much suffering. Thoughts and tears of equal bitterness flowed freely. But her firmness was unshaken. And when she came to announce her decision to her brother she had recovered in a considerable degree at least the appearance of composure. It was now quickly arranged between them that Agnes was to apply to Duchess Anne for a loan of the horse-litter, in which she had travelled to Cologne, and that after proceeding a few leagues privately in it with her tire-woman, Agnes was to send that conveyance back by the duchess's servant and to finish her journey on horseback, Ernest undertaking to explain her sudden absence as best he might to his kinsman the baron and the rest of the family, to forward a letter, which she had written and now confided to him, for the

elector, and to procure horses for herself and attendant, with which he was to follow with all speed so as to come up with them at the town where she had decided to sleep that night.

Ernest set about making his preparations with the utmost alacrity; chuckling at the thoughts of his having to inform Scotus of the inutility of any further efforts to attain their joint purpose. Agnes hastened to the duchess's apartment, and found her, early as it was, making ready for a morning promenade.

"Dearest Anne," said she, throwing herself into her friend's arms, and sobbing convulsively, as the suppressed force of her feelings again overpowered her, "This is a cruel leave-taking. I am come to bid thee farewell—I am about to leave Cologne this very morning."

An astonished repetition of the words was the reply.

"Oh, yes, I have been here but too long.

Those few short, happy weeks have been pregnant with danger, and in flight only is my chance of escape. Think me not wantonly abrupt and capricious. I must, I must be firm, and thou, dearest Anne, must aid in furnishing the means for my immediate and secret removal."

" And what has happened, my best friend, my own Agnes, to cause this sudden resolution?"

" Ask me not more than I can tell. It is enough that my brother insists on it, my own conscience approves it, and the whole happiness and welfare of another—very dear to me—imperiously commands it."

" His happiness ! surely that is involved in, dependent on, your presence."

" Anne, I named no one. How art thou thus informed? But ah, why need I ask? All eyes have doubtless seen what I never thought of concealing. All tongues have made me their

talk. Oh, shame, shame ! How can I fly fast enough from observation and slander !”

The duchess felt herself greatly embarrassed by these words. She had not been blind to the progress of the passion, the plain evidence of which the two persons mainly interested were the last to see. She was aware all through, both from Scotus and Nuenar, of their mutual designs to encourage the attachment of Ghebhard ; and she, acting from the double compliance with her tyrant’s orders and with her sectarian zeal, had sedulously done all in her power to facilitate the opportunities sought for by the elector, and by no means discouraged by Agnes, for the indulgence of an intercourse which gave them such mutual delight. During the preceding evening at Bruhl, Scotus had informed the duchess of a great part of what had passed between him and Ernest, and of their intention to meet her that morning for the mock consultation, with the ostensible purpose of preventing what they both were so resolved—but from

motives how different!—to promote. But she had also fixed a private rendezvous with Scotus, and by his desire, for an hour previous to that at which they were to meet Ernest. She was ignorant of what had passed between the elector and Agnes during their private promenade. She had remarked the varying emotions of the latter, and she saw clearly the warm elation of the former during the whole of the day. She knew not what conclusions to draw; and she felt now restricted from almost venturing an observation, much less pressing an explanation, which might lead her into some phrase or hint which had perhaps been at variance with the designs of him who had obtained such awful and unholy influence over her. She therefore listened to the request of Agnes for the loan of her travelling litter; she heard the plans for the journey, but she dared not all at once consent to, or even encourage, the proposal or the project. Considerably affected, both by the evidence of Agnes's sufferings and the consciousness of her

own duplicity, she could only give vague words of comfort, in return for her friend's communication ; and, recommending her to proceed calmly with her preparations for the journey, she promised to see her again in an hour, and left as a matter taken for granted her co-operation in her object.

At the period of our tale there was a thick plantation of elm and oak which stretched for several hundred yards by the side of the river, in that portion of the city now called the *Drei Konigenwerft*. It was there amongst other places that Duchess Anne, unattended and unobserved, and dressed with the utmost simplicity, used frequently to meet the Italian, at hours when his furtive entrance to the gardens might have been discovered by some of the inhabitants of Kriechlingen House. And as quickly as fast-walking could bring her to the rendezvous she repaired there, on Agnes quitting her ; and she soon perceived Scotus gazing into the deep and rapid stream, from the em-

bankment which partly overhung, and in other places was worn away by the eternal waters. She approached him, apparently unobserved, and with the chill timidity of her usual manner she pronounced his name.

He turned round, and in that soft and yet insincere tone which he at times assumed, he said,

“ Thou art well come, fair duchess, for had not some mighty attraction drawn me back I verily believe I had plunged into the stream, and sought in that liquid reflection of heaven for the quiet which the experience of the earth and the study of the skies cannot procure me.”

“ You speak and look fearfully, Count Scotus. That placid tone and solemn air are always indescribably painful. There seems a mockery mingled with your most serious remarks, and a levity in your deepest reflections, as though you loved to sport with the things both of earth and heaven. You mean not what you say—what do you wish for on earth that is not within your reach?”

“ Your love, duchess—nay look not such alarm—your love, and I possess it not.”

“ Alas ! you know your power over my heart and mind. Love I have not to give you. It is pledged irrevocably to my husband. But is not your influence over me greater even than his ?”

“ You tell me so.”

“ Have I not proved it ? Am I not for all lawful purposes your creature, aye, your very slave ! Oh ! when will this lead to good ? When will your fond predictions turn to account ? When am I to have my husband’s affections back ? When may I break from these mysterious trammels in which you have bound me ?”

“ I listen to you, as I always do to the witchery of your enchanting voice and eloquent words. But they fall, as ever, vainly upon my ear. You know I am not easily deceived, and yet you would continue to keep up this delusion ; you reject *my* love, you profess to seek to recover the duke’s—but is it not that of young

Ulrick which all the while you rejoice in ?
Answer me."

" Why should I answer a question ever put
and always self-relying ? You well know that
I would not for one moment tolerate the liking
of that fickle boy ; but, by your commands, in
the dangerous chance of causing jealousy, which
you tell me will surely bring my husband again
to my impatient arms."

" And so it will, fair duchess. I promise
you it will."

" When, oh, when ? Will you not, can you
not tell me ?"

" There is nothing in the face of this broad
river, and the glare of day in which I may read
the future. But to-night—if the heavens be
clear—I will consult the stars, and you shall
know faithfully the result."

" 'Tis always thus, vague promises of good
day after day, and still no final answer."

" It is worth waiting for. The duke himself
will be its bearer. In his own person, prostrate

and penitent at your feet, he will prove the efficacy of the means I am taking to bring him to his duty. Persevere then awhile and be patient. I pledge myself and the secrets of my art to your success."

"Heaven grant it!"

"Trust to *me*. It is not so sure that heaven is disposed to grant it. Virtue is too often doomed to suffer in this world, dear duchess; and wisdom and religion both tell us to be prepared for all results."

"Count Scotus, I *will* not doubt success. 'Tis thus at times you throw a blight on the harvest of hope you tell me to let ripen. Are you not sure of what you promise? If heaven be unpropitious how can mortal art succeed? If any chance of failure has come upon the process of your doings, tell me so at once, and the eddies of that rushing stream are my fitting refuge!"

"It were indeed a happy resting-place for the turbulent cares of life. You seem to chime in by an unintended sympathy with my own

notions. Were two beings, heart-bound to each other, but to whom fate refused an union here on earth, to plunge together in that liquid bed, methinks it were a destiny worth envying."

The accent of demoniac eagerness in which this speech was uttered made the duchess shudder. She started back from the water's side and stepped into one of the paths leading into the depths of the grove. Scotus followed her. But even there a dread of danger chilled her heart. She looked around, for the first time during those stolen walks, in hopes of seeing some one approach. She thought she heard a suppressed laugh; and her eye attracted to her companion's face, she observed a diabolical smile, as though he rejoiced in the terror he had inspired. It was perhaps at that moment—at least during that interview—that Scotus conceived the dark purpose which he thenceforward resolved to put into execution.

" You fly me, Duchess Anne!" exclaimed the Italian, in a voice of malignant irony.

“As the bird flutters in the fowler’s net or the hooked fish struggles from the fatal line ! Alas, Count Scotus, I have no chance in flight.”

“Why shun me then, and prove your unavailing repugnance ? Is this wise or politic ?”

“I act from impulse not from calculation. Your words and looks have terrified me, yet surely you do not mean me harm ?”

“I mean you happiness supreme—delight, of which the mind can form but a small notion. Would that you were disposed to meet my views ! But you shall be happy after your own choice, since my way suits you not. Rely on my zeal, and trust my power. The duke is prepared ere this to meet this new, this real test of his affection. It cannot fail. When he learns to dread the loss of your heart he will certainly return to lay his at your feet.”

“You re-assure me by these positive words. Ah ! then, do not again mar their cheering effect by urging feelings which I cannot meet, and forbear I implore you to alarm me by

even vague allusions, which sound more like covert threats of ill than open suggestions of relief."

" You mistake, adored duchess, the accent of despair for that of menace. You alone have forced dark thoughts into my mind, and to your rigid virtue I may become a victim: an aberration of the mind itself may be my lot. But not before I accomplish your most ardent objects. Those once complete I may sink into the grave or plunge into the billows, and close a life not then too long if ended in your service."

A scene of tears and sobs, so admirably feigned as to have astonished the actor himself at the extent of his own powers, followed this spoken prelude. The deluded duchess was again, for the time—but it was for the hundredth—completely overpowered, softened, and convinced of the sincerity of the arch-destroyer; but the strong purpose of her heart was not shaken. She loved her truant husband with too positive a truth to run any risk from

one she did not, could not, love. Scotus was supremely master of her mind. Her affections he never touched. She now reasoned with and consoled him on his apparent suffering, in terms of tenderness most irksome to the hypocrite. The scene had lasted too long for his patience. But he found such requisite at times, to keep up his influence, through the double medium of compassion and vanity—for each had a large share in his victim's facility to be deceived.

At length he turned abruptly to the subject of most immediate interest to him.

“But let me break from this too selfish indulgence of my immediate woe” said he, dash-ing away some ready-coming tears. “The interest and the happiness of others must not be forgotten. That is my consolation and recompense.—Your friend Countess Agnes I came to talk of her, to devise means for her good and that of my generous friend the elector, not to torment you with another scene of my despair.

Yesterday was the close of their probation. Ghebhard is wildly in love. He never slept last night. His perturbed feelings robbed his couch of its tenant. This morning he has sunk to rest, worn out by his excitement. We must now urge on his cause. But to do so effectively much management is required with that troublesome brother, whose coming here has proved an obstruction rather than a help. But I have a plan matured ; and first, fair duchess, you must see the countess, and sound her as to what passed between her and her 'lover in the grove"—

"I have already seen her."

"Indeed ! this morning ?"

"Yes, she came to announce her departure from Cologne to-day."

"Her departure ! what ! I have not heard you rightly, duchess, or you have mistaken her. By heavens you are dull of apprehension ! she meant not that. Speak, speak quickly, and clearly, on this manner. Tell me what passed

between ye, word for word ; more interests than one or two are hanging in suspense. Speak !”

To this impatient and almost brutal summons Duchess Anne meekly replied, by stating in a subdued tone the particulars of her morning conversation with Agnes; and adding the truth, that fear of thwarting the Italian’s views had restrained her from prolonging the interview, entering into details, or giving any decided answer to her friend.

Scotus was silent while the duchess spoke. His folded arms, knit brows, and lips compressed, told how he pondered on her words.

“ Yes—that will do ! my whole project is fixed—this is a lucky turn—now listen to me,” exclaimed he; and the breathless attention of the duchess was accordingly given to him, as he spoke half in soliloquy, half colloquy ; for he was for a moment lost in most unusual abstraction.

“ Yes, we must consent to, urge on, and aid in her withdrawal—not her departure quite. To lose sight of her awhile, to believe her los

to him, will drive the amorous elector almost mad. To regain her he will come to any terms. Aye, even to see her he will pay any price. To see her? and by my influence. But not to speak with her—no, that must not be. To see her in some mysterious and magic-seeming way. Excited, worked up to passion's bent—all this may be done! now listen to me, duchess."

"I am listening."

"And what have you heard?"

"Nothing distinctly of your muttered words, but that we must encourage my friend's departure."

"No, not her departure; but she must be withdrawn. For a day or two, more it may be, or perhaps less. I must see how her absence will work, and how it can be turned to best account—for the elector's happiness and her's—you know these are my only motives?"

"I can imagine none other."

"Except the pride and joy of serving you, fair duchess, through your friend."

The involuntary blush and smile which arose at this insinuating sentence were the only answers Scotus required—he saw that the way was prepared for his next proposition, and thus continued :—

“ To act effectually in this good cause I must have your assistance. To bring matters to a crisis some stratagem is required ; for the delicate qualms of Agnes, or Truchses’ impetuous ardour, if not rightly managed, might defeat my plans, and overthrow the fabric which I would raise for their own rapture. I may reckon on your aid ?”

“ My feeble means are always ready at your bidding, and for my dear friend’s welfare-sake.”

“ Well, then ! now for one serious question, put for a frank and honest answer—you have confided to Countess Agnes the affair of the jewels ?”

“ Never, so help me Heaven !” was the firm reply of the duchess, while she gave back a fearless look to the Italian’s penetrating glance,

and her heart leaped with joy at the prudent reserve she had maintained.

“ Then you have kept our secret well and wisely. But you must reveal the whole transaction to her this morning, without delay—my projects hang on her knowing all.”

This startling command was a new spring of pleasure to the duchess. She would have spoken, but Scotus proceeded.

“ All, you must tell her all, without reserve. And then you must with your whole eloquence, with tears, if they can spring as in most women at command—how different from man’s rugged nature, to whom weeping is almost worse than death—but let that pass—you must use flattery, Duchess Anne, entreaties of all kinds if she prove stubborn, to gently force her consent to accompany you to my apartments at the palace, for the purpose of persuading me to restore those jewels back to your possession. You understand me? I speak clearly?”

“ Oh, yes; but I am bewildered by your words.

How can I fulfil this intricate purpose of your's, and why? Must I denounce *you* to Agnes—lower myself to base deception—and lead her to what I dare not utter nor think on. I *know* you cannot, must not insist on this."

"Indeed, indeed I must, and you must do it. But first to lay the phantoms you have conjured up. I would not have you quite *denounce* me, but you must tell the facts, as to my becoming possessed of and keeping back the jewels. You must assure your friend that my esteem and admiration of her virtue, and—yes, yes, you may add her beauty; there is not much risk of that offending her—ensure her an influence that will be irresistible, and moreover I swear to you, most unbelieving duchess, that it shall be so, and that I will place the precious caskets with their entire contents, even as I had them from you, freely in Countess Agnes's hands, in trust for you their rightful owner. Nay, look not doubtingly still—I swear it, by heaven and earth, and all things they contain, including

you, the loveliest thing on the one, and the sure inheritor of the other!"

Duchess Anne clasped her hands upon her breast to keep down the throbings of her delight.

"Is not this object, joined to your dear friend's happiness, worth some trouble, some cost of words, and even a little innocent exaggeration, soft flattery, or the like? nothing short of this can persuade Agnes to come to the palace—I know that well—and her coming is the price of your recovered treasures, for otherwise I honestly tell you you receive them not."

"Oh, she shall come if it depend on me. She will I am sure of her own free choice when I tell her the double purpose, my peace of mind regained and her own happiness honourably secured."

"Hold, hold, duchess, you go too fast, though not too far. These are the sure results of the visit I propose, but she is not to know that any design in her own favour is in question.

Pride, honour, dignity, and what not, would be all up, in a masquerade of imagined virtue, to prevent the step if she believed it to be for her interests even though joined with your's. Men rarely mistake false delicacy for the real. Women eternally. There is not one in ten of your squeamish sex who has courage enough to pursue her own advantage at the risk of a false construction on her actions. No, it is for you and you alone, that Agnes is to accede to this measure, which will make her in the long run Electress of Cologne."

" And you will place *all* the jewels in her possession ?"

" What, duchess ! Have you then no thought for your friend ? Is not her happiness a jewel of price, and do I not promise also to secure that ?"

" Oh, I do rejoice in aught that brings good to her, but doubly if it be joined with my own."

" Now then, dear duchess, speed you to your

task. I go to seek the brother and turn him from his purposed departure. He shall communicate to his sister the necessity for delay, and then the plot shall thicken!"

The duchess was already gone. Scotus marked her with a fiendish smile, as she tripped lightly through the grove. But she suddenly turned round and approached him, almost running. He met her half way.

"Alas! in my selfish joy I had forgot one point vital to my friend's honour, and indeed on which I am sure her consent to accompany me to the palace would completely hinge. You pledge yourself solemnly that she is not to see the elector? To risk no chance of indignity or disgrace? And discovery of our visit would lead to both."

"*That* I swear solemnly. And the best guarantee to satisfy your doubts or her's is the fact that my whole object would be defeated were she to be discovered—even by Truchses himself."

"Enough; I am now satisfied. Farewell count, I shall wait your next summons with intense impatience."

"You shall have it duchess, but *when* depends on the slow or rapid march of circumstances and feelings not quite in my control.—But hold, I too have a second thought on this affair. You must not, finally make your request for your friend's interference till I see you, which shall be within an hour at Kriechlingen House. See her in the interim—sound her, make your *confession*, but no direct appeal to her assistance.. There is something yet to be done which if it succeed will make her consent a certainty."

The colloquists then quitted the grove in different directions.

CHAPTER V.

As the Italian proceeded to the place of his appointment with Ernest de Mansfeldt, he observed a stranger—but one whose name and race he instantly knew, as surely as though he had seen his baptism certificate and pedigree before him—riding up one of the narrow streets a handsome but jaded horse, and followed by a varlet, on another equally valuable and equally tired.

“ Well done, Count Jerome!” inwardly exclaimed Scotus. “ Yet thou hast after all small merit perhaps, since these dolts and dupes will play so easily into your hands. Yes, this is

one of a different stamp. He must be managed by other means. Never mind, I'll manage him!"

He followed for a few minutes the slow movements of the cavalier, and saw him alight at a hostel, over the door of which hung the rudely-painted sign of a robust and rubicund angel, with a pair of flame-coloured wings, so huge and heavy that the whole might be taken for an effigy of Sampson carrying the gates of Gaza on his back. The host, who was a Spaniard long domiciliated at Cologne, came pompously from his porch, after some impatient calls from the young stranger, and bowed him into the house with much ceremony, while the varlet, guided by a stable-boy, led the horses into the court-yard. Scotus then proceeded to his rendezvous close to the palace; and there he met Ernest waiting, an air of satisfaction tempering his nervous anxiety. Scotus approached him, with a gesture of astonishment, and exclaimed in a tone of well-feigned alarm,

“ What ! Here ! Thank heaven I meet you still safe ! It is then as I feared—you have not received my letter ?”

“ Letter ! no.”

“ Nor seen my secretary ?”

“ No.”

“ And your sister—is *she* still safe? not yet seized ?”

“ Seized ! What mean you, Count Scotus ?”

“ Are you then indeed ignorant of all that is passing ? Do you not know that your plan of departure is discovered—how or by whom betrayed it is for you to judge !—that every outlet of the city is beset by the tyrant’s myrmidons—that you are destined to a dungeon, and your sister to the blandishments of Bruhl, and at the best which may befall her, a marriage, perhaps after all a mock ceremony, with this prince-prelate, who has dared even to threaten me with punishment for my remonstrances ? You have heard nought of this ?”

“ Not a word—but how—”

“ Ah, Ghebhard, thou art more cunning than I thought consistent with thy daring! It is clear, Count Mansfeldt, that you were not to be molested in the town, for fear of publicity, but pounced on as soon as you passed the faubourg, and then surely disposed of. How lucky it is that my warning does not come too late. Now we have not a moment to lose. I have your safety provided for. Come along, we must not be observed.”

“ And Agnes, what of her?”

“ Indeed that may be well asked, what of her? Who gave notice to the elector of her pretended flight? Who offered the hint of an arrest upon the road? Ah, Count Ernest, you share the dim-sightedness of all virtuous men. You know nothing of woman’s wiles.”

“ It is impossible. She could not play so false a game. And for what purpose?”

“ How else but by yielding to an assumed violence excuse the breach of her solemn vow, and become the wife of another?”

“ God in heaven ! Agnes, then has told you of our pledge ? Infamous, infamous !”

“ No count, before heaven to whom you appeal she never did !”

“ But yet—”

“ I know of it—aye and much more of you and your’s. Ask me not ever for the source of my knowledge, but now least of all, no time must be lost in concealing you and securing her !”

“ I must see her instantly.”

“ Then you must be prepared for loss of liberty—or to lead her to the arms of this amorous elector.”

“ What a cruel dilemma ! Why is not my brother here ?”

“ He *is* here ; and labouring heart and hand to hurry on this impious, this unnatural union, which will tear Agnes for ever from you.”

“ I thought he would. This is the crowning blow of fate ! What now may be done ? Count Scotus, I throw myself wholly upon you.”

“ And safely may you do so. I have the will, and the means, to save her and you. Come on !”

“ Where would you lead me ?” cried Ernest, starting back after they had proceeded a few yards, on his companion stopping and applying a key to a small wicket in the wall of the palace garden.

“ To the only place where there is safety for you in Cologne—to my own apartments in the electoral palace.”

“ How ! into the very den of my arch-enemy ! what does this mean ?”

And as Ernest uttered this faint expression of the doubts and fears which rushed upon his mind, his hand, as irresolute as his head was weak, half moved towards his sword.

“ Out with it boldly, and at once count, and if it need a sheath, plunge it here into this breast already too deeply wounded by the suspicions which now dishonour me—no, not me, but *you*. But I can and ought to bear with any of your

race ! Yet ere it is too late give yourself a moment's pause for thought. Where can you be so safe, so unsuspected, as in the sanctuary of *my* chamber which no one dares to violate ? Which of the furious creatures of its owner would dream of seeking you in their master's very palace ? But do you doubt my honour ? If so, say it frankly—and then farewell ! I can pardon even that from a descendant of Polrath de Mansfeldt. But then you may indeed draw your sword, and fling away the scabbard. For Henry of Liegnitz and his rabblement, by this time the hired mercenaries of Truchses, will be soon upon you and will give your weapon ample work."

"I know not what to think or do," said the uncertain Ernest.

"Then be guided by one who has thought and action at command. You have but two courses—certain ruin, or a chance of safety. Which will you follow ? Hark ! by heavens the Reitres are already out—they come this way

—I hear the trampling of their horses. I must not be suspected of being leagued with you for no purpose. To carry the great end we have both in view I am ready to brave danger in any shape ; but to be seized on like a puling girl shall never be *my* fate. Farewell, Count Mansfeldt ! They come—save yourself now as best you may.”

A hurried movement of the key in the lock of the wicket accompanied these words ; and as the Italian entered, his companion forced himself close upon and almost past him into the garden.

“ My mind is made up—I throw myself wholly on your honour—you will act fairly by me, I am sure,” said Ernest in much agitation. Scotus answered by a smile, to which Ernest gave on the instant half-a-dozen different constructions. Just then laughter and the chorus of a loose song burst from the band of Liegnitz’s recruits, who passing by chance beneath the

wall, little dreamed of the sensation they had caused at the other side.

“ Miscreants !” exclaimed Scotus, “ How they revel in the hopes of your destruction !”

“ Hush, hush, let us seek your apartment, count, if we may indeed do so safely.”

“ Fear nothing—while with me you are invisible,” replied Scotus, leading the way through a dark damp avenue of yew and laurel trees, which led, without any opening on the less sombre parts of the garden, to the wing in which his ground-floor suite of rooms was situated. In a few minutes he and his unwilling visitor were in that room where the short scene between the elector and the Italian took place on the night the latter arrived in Cologne, and from which a private passage communicated into Ghebhard’s own sleeping apartments. There Scotus set to work with all his ingenuity, to tranquillize the fears of Ernest as to his own safety, and to assure him of the certainty of his being able to protect Agnes and bring them to-

gether for the purpose of effecting their escape. To set her mind at rest as to her brother's situation, the latter wrote her a few hasty lines, at the Italian's dictation, telling her to confide in all things to his generous friend Count Scotus, over whom she possessed great influence, and who would take every measure for her protection and for their joint evasion. Scotus placed this letter carefully in his doublet; and he then gave his prisoner (for such in fact Ernest's weakness had made him) into the care and keeping of his youthful but most prudent-looking secretary; with orders to provide him with refreshments and, as far as was possible, with amusement until Scotus should return. To Ernest's reiterated inquiry as to his security from intrusion on the part of Ghebhard or his satellites, the Italian replied by a profusion of oaths and protestations, on this occasion of real sincerity—"But in case of the worst," said he, "look here—Is there not wherewithal here to enable you to defend yourself, and to die

like a hero on heaps of your slaughtered enemies?"

With these words he opened a large chest, which was literally crammed with weapons of every possible form consistent with the strength of one man to wield. Matchlocks, falchions, pistols, daggers, axes, and a profuse display of powder and bullets met Ernest's gaze. But it is doubtful—for he was never tried—whether his spirit was of that sort which leads iron-nerved men to do a desperate deed, alone. He would, like most others, have been sufficiently ready to bear his part in a *mélée*. But the single-hearted courage which Scotus appealed to is not the lot of even every gallant warrior.

The Italian next proceeded—it was a busy morning for him—to Kriechlingen House. A visit to the ladies after the previous day's excursion was but natural. But he soon contrived to see the duchess alone; and he was well-pleased to learn that she had commenced the execution of her mission in the way pre-

scribed, and had so far succeeded in her object as to have greatly affected Agnes by her recital, and to have drawn from her a voluntary expression of regret that the immediate necessity for her flight prevented the possibility of her interfering for the restitution of the jewels.

“Good, good!” exclaimed Scotus, as the duchess ceased, “all now is right. Give her this billet from her brother. But read it first—it is as you see unsealed. It will tell you of the extension of my influence. He has consented to put off the journey for to-day; and is now in a secure retreat. Agnes must immediately quit this house and you along with her. Come out as if for a mere walk in the garden, dressed plain even to homeliness. Pass through the private door on the outer terrace—you shall find it unlocked—proceed directly to the floating bridge, cross the river, and then repair to our sometime place of meeting, the farmhouse in the valley of roses. There ye can safely rest till dusk. Ere it is totally dark

you shall hear my thrice-repeated whistle. Come out alone to meet me in the copse. I will then fix the hour for your and Agnes's visit."

"Can she not see you *then*—and there make the appeal on which you place such stress and which is to procure the restitution?"

"Ah, duchess, duchess, again self, only self, and those poor baubles, so worthless in comparison with the fate of your dear friend, which hangs, I tell you again, on her coming to the palace."

"'Tis too true—I had forgotten that, and even now I despair of her consent to such a step."

"Do you think her brother's presence in my apartment could induce her?"

"Oh yes, no doubt—but how?"

"Leave that to me. I promise you an invitation to her from his hand to meet him there. Is that enough?"

"Heaven grant it may be!"

“ Now then to complete your task. Be quick and prudent.”

And again the confederates separated.

About the same time Ghebhard Truchses, having passed some hours in a deceitful semblance of repose, had risen in that state of unrefreshed yet by no means fatiguing excitement so common to ardent lovers. The turmoil of the preceding day still kept up his fever of joy, more nourishing than exhausting: at least the feelings of such a time seem to themselves as though they were never to be worn out. Buoyant, bounding, fresh-dipped, as it were, in a river of eternal youth, his mind seemed to fly through the vast regions of thought as a wild bird cleaves the air. His person, true to the mysterious sympathy, felt active and elastic. His eyes were bright, his voice clear and mellow, every nerve seemed firmly yet lightly braced. He felt invincible.

It was in this mood that the elector received the early visits of Nuenar and Kriechlingen,

with Count Solms, Baron Winneburg, the Dome Provost Count George of Wittingstein, and some other members of the Chapter of Cologne, all but avowed protestants, but every one of them resolved to force matters at length to a crisis with the sovereign, who was not only the choice of their affection but now the sheet-anchor of their hopes. These individuals, as the leaders of the reform party, had, ever since the opening of the congress some weeks before, played a deep but steady game with regard to Truchses. Encouraging him, as has been seen, in the passion which had obtained such hold of his mind, leaving him to the almost magical influence which a desperate adventurer was day by day twining round him, they also kept him in total ignorance of the intrigues that were brought actively into play against him by the efforts of his various colleagues of the conference. Every one, friend or foe, seemed to combine for the one great purpose of placing the elector in such a position as would force

him to avow his attachment to the reformed doctrines, and put him at once into an attitude of hostility against both the pope and the emperor, his spiritual and temporal chiefs.

Matters to his injury had gone to much greater lengths than either Truchses or his adherents suspected. The representations forwarded both to Vienna and Rome, with all the virulence of envy and malice, had met a prompt attention ; and at this very epoch an envoy from one place and a nuncio from the other were close to Cologne, armed with all the powers of remonstrance, and as a last resort with all the thunder of civil and ecclesiastical anathema.

Ernest of Bavaria the expectant Bishop of Liege was not far off. Aided by his emissaries in the city he was by all possible means fomenting the hostility of the bigotted conservative party among the burghers, against the man whose only object was through their enlightenment to effect the removal of abuses and the happiness of the people at large. The

political situation of the electorate and its chief was thus at a point of most critical importance. His state of moral feeling has been already described. No individual ever touched a crisis more completely decisive of his fate in all its combinations.

Truchses met the members of the deputation with a more than half-way readiness, almost anticipated their views, acceded to their hints, and finally satisfied them that, fully aware of the extensive conspiracy for some time hatching for his ruin, he had taken large measures of precaution to meet and combat it.

Astonished at this proof of vigorous fore-thought, while they believed him to have been sunk in the lazy voluptuousness of love, they marvelled as to the source of his information. And at this period of the interview Prince Henry of Liegnitz was introduced by the elector's special orders. His appearance somewhat startled the deputation, to all of whom, except Nuenar, he was totally unknown. But they

soon became reconciled to roughness of demeanour, and a doubtful character, in honour of the homage paid, then as now, to rank – and of the avidity which now and at all times, leads human nature to adopt whatever may conduce to its own interests.

It was not Truchses' design to let his adherents know that the chance-coming of the Prince of Liegnitz was the first and only source of his knowledge on the points now discussed. He meant rather to let them believe by implication that he had for some time been himself the heart and soul of the prince's movements, that the new levies had been actually raised on his account, and that he and the sovereign adventurer of whose aid he was resolved to avail himself were older acquaintances than any one thought. In the course of this council all present were satisfied that Truchses was a being of still higher powers than they had before given him credit for, for even Nuenar was staggered as to his connexion with Liegnitz, and admitted

to himself that even if the scene of the preceding day at Bruhl was precisely what it seemed to be, his friend Ghebhard had turned it to an account which none but a man of a high order of genius for politics could have done. And so it is. The power of promptly seizing a truth, a fact, an opportunity, of adapting ourselves to it, and it to our purposes, is the true test of genius in all its high behests. The dull enlightenment of the mass of public men is as total darkness compared to the lightning flashes of the eye of talent.

The Elector-archbishop of Cologne was on this occasion pronounced, by those friends who knew him best and saw him closest during the whole period of his reign, to be more than equal to the emergency ; for he amply proved himself one of those great spirits which rise with circumstances, too buoyant to sink beneath, too brave to shrink from, the flood. Truchses gave a new inspiration to all present. The reader need not be told again where he had found his

own ; and no set form of words needs do new homage to the splendid passion from which it sprung—the source of true grandeur in minds essentially great.

Plans of serious import, a system of organization for the electoral resources, an estimate of the available force both native and mercenary, the form of an appeal to the Lutheran princes of the empire, to Henry of Navarre, and the other chiefs of the French Huguenots, to William Prince of Orange, to Elizabeth of England, were among the matters debated. Besides which the Prince of Liegnitz, who was not admitted into those more secret details, made a statement of his force, his projects for augmenting it, a calculation of expenses, and the terms of engagement on which he was willing to transfer the floating capital of his alliance into the service of Cologne. Various preliminaries decided, other points adjourned, but all more or less disposed of, the council broke up ; and Ghebhard Truchses, then resuming those higher

attributes of his character before explained, divested his mind at once and completely of all associations of public business, opened the door for the imprisoned secrets of his heart, and let them all rush out like a flight of seraphim, dazzling with their brightness and freshning with their wings the broad Heaven of his happiness. Proud of the dangers that beset him, despising the meanness or defying the might of his enemies, neither reckoning on nor refusing the aid of friends, but relying wholly and boldly on himself, he harnassed his mind as it were for battle, in the glorious panoply of courage, and under the resplendent banner of love. His toilet arranged in all the profuse elegance of expense and taste, his sprig of heath-blossom placed over his heart, and over it within his doublet's fold the clearly copied manuscript of his last night's labour, he took his place in his carriage, and, as usual with but slight attendance, he took his way over the oft-beaten track which led to Kriechlingen House.

CHAPTER VI.

THE hostel of “The Angel” was one of those open houses, wild, straggling, comfortless, yet well-stored and largely-frequented, which were common to the epoch of our tale, and which have been, from frequent descriptions, both by master and apprentice-hands, long made familiar to the great mass of readers. A huge fire in the wide chimney all the year round, food and liquor adapted for all seasons, and ready for most tastes, extortion as the rule and fair-dealing the exception, a forced welcome for all comers, a total indifference for those who went away, a constant resort of company, too loose

to be bound by any rules or made subject to classification, such was the hostel. And the host? why, he was like most other innkeepers in all ages and countries, but particularly like the generality of those who followed the right worshipful calling in his own times. By name José Arezega, by birth a Murcian, by profession a soldier, he had seen a great deal of life in its many vicissitudes, but never had such close opportunities of observing it as in the varied specimens of character which presented themselves to him in quick succession now. He was well to do in the world; but was not likely to be a bit more honest or humane from being above want. The harshest rogues are not those of the highways or the hovel.

The young stranger who had arrived that morning was very soon afterwards fast asleep in one of the best beds—and the best are and were always bad in a German inn. It was short and narrow beyond any fair medium estimate of man's proportion or disproportion, with linen

loosely flung on, and the most insidious instrument of sleeping torture that ever was invented, in the shape of a swan's-down stuffed silk sack, which no ingenuity can balance for an hour together on the body it is meant to give warmth to, and which at the very first twitch of the most wholesome sleeper is sure to tumble off, leaving the victim in that state of lazy irritability which makes him curse the cold and the chambermaid, but totally prevents his having the energy to jump out of bed and pick up his "coverlid." But the traveller now in question bade defiance to all such discomforts. His legs found places outside of the bed, since there was no room for them within—he rolled the sheets round him, and rolled them off in his random unconsciousness ; and as for the *plumeau*, it lay far out on the floor after the very first kick which settled him into slumber. His riding clothes were flung in a heap close by ; his rapier was on the table near at hand, with a small leathern bag containing money, a chain of gold,

and some other ornaments which stamped the owner to be a man of station ; and any one who might have peeped at him while he lay stretched in sleep (perhaps the chambermaid did) would have acknowledged him to be a youth of great personal beauty. There was a slight contraction on his brow and a curl on his lip, even while he dreamed, that spoke character at least. His horses were in the meantime also sleeping in their liberal supply of litter ; and his varlet had laid his head on the saddle-bags, and snored away refreshingly under the manger.

At every scream of the rough maids and every bang of the doors, which accompanied the household work, Don José, as he was called familiarly, hollowed fiercely out for silence, and thundered forth imprecations on the noise-makers in accents that far out-noised their greatest clamour. The don moreover spoke atrocious bad German, at which all his servants made it a point to laugh most boisterously, so that between the boorish indifference of the

household and the angry remonstrance of the host, the stranger had every possible chance afforded him of being awake. But he defied it all. He slept on. And so we leave him for awhile.

It was in the midst of one of those noisy efforts to obtain silence that Don José was struck by the appearance of a gentleman close at his elbow, who, the moment he could make himself heard, requested (in Spanish so pure that the host took him for a countryman of his own) to be shown to a private chamber where he could await till the stranger cavalier who arrived that morning on the roan gelding might be ready to receive his name.

"A chamber you shall have, kind señor," responded the host, in his ordinary tone of pompous civility, "A chamber such as his omnipotent majesty, the king of our own blessed and glorious Spain, might be happy to repose in; but I fear that you will have to wait a long time before the cavalier in question is awake."

“ Could you not call him?—or have him called?”

“ Truly, good señor, I might give my orders to Herman Klotz, my head waiter, and he would in due obedience send up to the sleeper’s chamber Lena, or Katrine, or Laura Schwartz, or any other of my numerous under servants—but it would assuredly be as much as the life of the poor wretch so sent was worth; for the stranger swore that whoever disturbed him should feel at least an ell of his rapier’s blade pass clear through their body on the spot.”

“ He is choleric it would seem?”

“ I should say so, señor, as far as I may judge, and I hope it is no flattery to say I am no small judge of human character. And when I see a man fume and fret, and imprecate with curses on his lips and frowns on his front, and can get from him in half an hour but haughty looks and angry words, I always make a shrewd guess that he is not of a mild temper, or that”—

“ Something has ruffled it ?”

“ Exactly so, señor, you have hit it to a hair. Your highness has no doubt yourself seen much of life—and, therefore you will, perhaps, be pleased to order some slight refreshment”—

“ To prove that I know how to ensure the welcome of a hostel-keeper ! So! bring wine—Malvoisie, and let me talk with thee, mine host.”

“ Herman Klotz !” roared out the Spaniard, in his highest key major ; and on the appearance of the *Kelner* he ordered him to fetch a flask of the very best Malvoisie which lay under the wings of the angel. He in the meantime led the way into a dark and dingy room within the kitchen, declaring it to be of his best for privacy and honourable decoration. His eulogy on the furniture passed unheeded by his guest. The wine was soon on the board, with two deep, broad-topped, thick-lipped, glasses, be-daubed with the flaunting badges of the elector-

ate in gaudy combinations of yellow, green, and red. Just as the *Kelner* applied the cork-screw, a clattering sound of boots and rapiers on the kitchen floor attracted the attention of Don José, who made his excuses and strided forth majestically, followed by his head-waiter Herman Klotz. The stranger then closed the door, gently but not completely, and not being able to see through the panels, he quietly put his ear to the opening.

“ Welcome, thrice welcome, my magnanimous señors ! The clash of the scabbard is a cheering sound, (until time comes to brandish the blade) to the ears of an old soldier. What can I or my hostelrie do for the honourable service of so gallant a company ? ” said the host, in his most superfine German, to some four or five swaggering, and swash-buckler looking persons, who could have been at once recognised by any of those who saw the company of the captain’s table at Bruhl the preceding day.

“ Why, you can give us good cheer, and I hope at a reasonable charge,” replied Ritter Heinrick, the title by which Von Sweinishen was ordinarily known among his comrades.

“ If there is honour out of Spain or honesty in Cologne, you are now at the fountain-head of both—though I am no boaster—my noble señors.”

“ Then let’s see if we cannot strike a bargain at once. We are here ten of us all together in this good city, captains in the levies of the most noble and mighty the sovereign Prince Henry of Liegnitz, himself well-known for the most promising customer that ever shed joy over the happy countenance of a hostel-keeper, and who thinks no more of the price that is put upon what he purchases”—

“ Than most other princes do of paying it. I know the character of his highness, my brave señor, and I hope his officers follow his example in some things—at a great distance,” said the Spaniard with an air of cold impertinence,

greatly different from what he wore a minute before. Two or three of the captains muttered a curse and murmured a menace, one twisted his mustachios, another swung round his long red beard which streamed meteor-like before him, a third struck the point of his scabbard forcibly on the tiled floor. Don José stood and looked quite indifferent to those various symptoms; and Ritter Heinrich interposed to put an end to any attempt at blustering on the part of his comrades.

"Good friend," said he, "a license to sell liquor is no warrant for a loose tongue. His highness is a noble and generous prince and a brave soldier. But we are not here to descend to plead his cause with every babbler, but to make a bargain for our gracious master's nourishment and that of his suite. Let's then to the point—let's stick to it, for that's the way to do business."

"Agreed, señor. What then is your will?"

"To know for what daily sum you will fur-

nish board and lodging of your best for his highness and those who are honorued by serving him. You may take time to reflect while we drink success to ‘the Angel’ in a gallon of Rhine wine. Let it be brought.”

“ Herman Klotz ! set a gallon measure of the forty-six, with glasses for these noble gentlemen. I promise ye, señors, the flavour of my forty-six will leave a smack on your palates that it would take a cask of such trash as ye drank last night at ‘the Holy Trinity’ to efface. Now as to the prices I need no thinking. I have them at my fingers’ ends—in one sense I mean, no offence, señors, I hope; but in another, that is as regards payment I have a way of touching my lodgers’ money beforehand.”

“ As for that, friend, it’s all the same to his highness whether he pays to-day or to-morrow.”

“ Just what I had heard of him señor—so now for my prices. A crown and a half a-day for his highness and each of those noble persons who dine at his table ; half-a-crown for every

other officer : and nine groschen per varlet, with a bed for every two men, two good meals for each, wine included ; and two flasks extra before going to sleep, as a parting cup towards a good night's rest."

" A fair offer if the treatment be good. It's a bargain," said Von Sweinishen. " We begin from this day ; so get your rooms ready and have a dinner dressed forthwith. We've not had many words about it—Good morning, host ! Expect us at noon."

" Not many, señor, but there is one to be added. I told you I expected payment in advance. I stand to my conditions ; you can calculate the amount."

" You *are* indeed an old soldier, good mine host," replied the accustomed financier-general of his highness of Liegnitz, " and I will even humour thee, but after mine own fashion. It is not customary to walk the streets with a purse full of crowns wagging at one's rapier's side. But here, take this chain—it is of ster-

ling gold and the gift of my father—take it to some congenial Jew and get an advance of a hundred crowns on it. But look sharp to the lender. I know the number of links, and by the thunder of heaven I will have an ear each, from you and your household, for every one that may be missing when I redeem the pledge!"

With these words he flung his chain on the kitchen-table and left the hostel with his comrades.

"Come hither, landlord!" whispered the stranger from the chamber within; while José, somewhat alarmed by the Ritter Heinrick's fierce threat, and constitutionally cautious on all matters of bargain and sale, was dangling the massive chain in his hands, calculating its weight and counting the links. Hearing the call, he exclaimed,

"Pardon, pardon, señor! By the life of my saint I had forgotten your excellency altogether; but I am now ready to do justice to your most worshipful invitation, and to show

you how I relish a flask of true Malvoisie flavoured by the honour of such good company?"

" You have made a good bargain for the interests of the Angel, my friend—those gallants are no higgler for a price—you will make a round profit in a week or two by their custom."

" Of that I doubt, señor. I am not exorbitant, but I might it is true have abated somewhat of my first demand ; and I have studied the human character to small purpose if I have not discovered that the customer who makes no price is often he who makes no payment."

" But in this case you are secured."

" That's as it may be, señor. How do I know what metal this chain is made of? How do I know its worth? And how can I go seek a loan on it and at the same time have preparation made to feed these hungry adventurers?"

" Make your mind easy on that head, mine host. Here is a purse with much more than the sum required. Take forth the gold; I will take charge of the chain, and advance

double the amount in question as security for its safety."

"Well that *does* save trouble and lighten risk," added José, counting out the gold pieces to the whole amount involved in the stranger's offer.

The latter rolled the chain into one of his side pockets, placed the purse back in his girdle, and then desired the host, who had already quaffed a couple of bumpers, to show him the way to the young stranger's chamber, taking on himself all the risk of disturbing him.

The don, impressed with an awful sense of his new customer's importance, wealth, and hardihood, offered no objection; and soon placed him in the corridor opposite the stranger's door, through the chinks of which most audible signals of sleeping security were sent forth. A firm knock against the panel was echoed by an exclamation of awakening surprise. The "who's there?" was answered by the turning of the clumsy key which had remained

outside ; and the stare of the one stranger starting up in his bed was met by the courtly salutations of the other who stood beside it.

“ This is no time for ceremony, Count Christopher; I come from your sister,” said the latter.

“ Have I still a sister or one I may own as such ? and who are you, that come, so abruptly on her part ? ” exclaimed the younger de Mansfeldt, endeavouring to recal his senses to their waking uses.

“ You *have* a sister certainly, and one that few men would hesitate about claiming—one who may be a sovereign princess within four-and-twenty hours if you manage well. Who I am is of no consequence. I am your friend and her’s. You shall know my name in due time.”

“ You take a high tone, sir stranger ; and by my good sword, which lies there hiltwards to my grasp, I am doubting whether to pass it through your body, or to offer you my hand in the pledge of mutual service ! ”

The stranger drew off his glove, and stretched

forth a hand, every finger of which was loaded with rings, antique and modern. Christopher de Mansfeldt had no longer any hesitation. He shook the proffered hand heartily, and begged, in the name of good fellowship, that the stranger would sit down beside him, and enter quickly on the matter of his errand, first telling him how Agnes knew of his arrival in Cologne.

“A figure and face like your’s, Count Christopher, was not likely to pass through the streets unobserved; and the living likeness of Agnes de Mansfeldt spoke your name too plainly for mistake.”

“They say I resemble her,” said the brother, smiling and running his hand involuntarily across his face and through his hair. “But what of her? I burn with impatience.”

“Tempered by vanity,” thought Scotus—it was needless to announce him to the reader by name. “Why this,” added he aloud, “that she is now concealed by the elector, her——”

“Paramour! That is the word. And if I

blush in speaking it, it is from rage not shame
—*that* shall be stifled in my revenge.”

“ You are too hasty. I would have said her lover.”

“ ‘Tis all the same—there is no need of mincing matters now.”

“ Permit me again to check your ardour.—Your sister is as yet innocent—in the world’s eye at least, except in having listened to the seducer at all.”

“ Innocent ! I have proofs of her guilt, aye under her own hand, sent me by some kind friend of our family.”

“ Some warm-worded billet, perhaps, written in the careless confidence of girlhood ?”

“ No, my sister is not of that stamp. It was the ardent confession of her crime. Would I might know the author of the friendly warning that brought me here !”

“ You do know him, you have given him the grasp of amity. He is, as he has told you, your friend ”

“By Heavens, I thought it was you the moment you entered the room! Had it not been for that instinctive feeling I might now have been wiping your blood from my blade, for I swore to put to death whoever might disturb me!”

“A rash vow rightly broken. Now are you ready to make a new one, to force this archbishop and arch-profligate to do honourable reparation to your sister’s *risked* honour—I use no positive word?”

“Am I ready? What brought me here faster than a hired courier? Why have I snatched this scant repose but to brace my arm for the deed? By Heavens the seducer shall die!”

“Or marry Agnes!”

“Marry her! yes, that *would* be better—and you said something erewhile about her becoming a sovereign princess? What must I do? You come from her. Tell me her wishes?”

"To convince you that I do, look on this ring. She assured me it would be a passport to your confidence."

"I know the ring. It is an old family relic on which hangs some paltry legend. But I care nothing for traditions and tokens. I am a man of action. You seem cast in the same mould. What is to be done?"

"In Agnes's opinion there is but one course, and she relies on your promptitude and courage to complete it. You must force your way into the elector's presence, and at the point of that good rapier insist on his marrying your sister."

"Did Agnes suggest this?"

"She urges it as absolutely necessary for her honour's sake."

"She was not wont to act and speak thus—but it is two years since we have met, and women change their characters."

"Or lose them, when left so long to themselves."

" Ernest should have cared after her. This is his fault."

" What could you expect from one like him? Energy and valour are the materials to watch over a sister's honour; and you, you alone are the man for this critical moment to secure her's."

" By Heaven, I'll do it! It will be a great action to force this mitred hypocrite to renounce his errors and his honours together—to give an example to the world—to ruin the profligate—"

" Softly awhile, my gallant young friend," said Scotus, laying his hand on the shoulder of the hot-headed youth, and checking his intention of springing out of bed. " Calmness of manner and tone are essential with coolness of arrangement in a case like this, nor must you let a mad revenge destroy your sister's interest and your own. All may be conciliated with perfect ease. You would rather see Agnes Electress of Cologne—and yourself a colonel in

your protestant brother-in-law's army, than drive him and her to beggary, and yourself to—”

“ I care not for myself—but your argument has weight. My sister's honour and happiness stand first. I know not this elector nor his designs—except on her. But if indeed he could hold his station as a reformed prince of the empire—and keep up his forces—perhaps he might increase them even—and certainly his service with promotion would be better for me than my lieutenancy in the King of Saxony's, or the promise of a troop in the army of Condé—”

“ All this is for after-thought. But for the present you must not by look or gesture betray the agitation of your mind, or excite inquiry as to your name or business. Is your varlet prudent ?”

“ He may well be, for an incautious word as to me or my affairs is his death-warrant.”

“ Good ! I will now leave you for awhile. Make your toilette, refresh yourself, keep

quietly in your room, and wait my return. I will secure the best means for your seeing the elector without risk of interruption ; reckon on me !”

“ I do, for there is something about you that inspires confidence, and be assured I am not one that gives mine hastily.”

“ That I discovered at once—and I honour you for your caution,” replied Scotus, closing the door ; and putting in practice his rule of always praising men for the quality in which they were most deficient. As he reached the kitchen again on his way out he found the host in a very bad temper, but endeavouring to keep it down by another bumper from the bottle of Malvoisie which he held in his hand.

“ May you live a thousand years, señor,” said he as Scotus appeared, “ and verily after coming safe out of the room of that young madman, I think you have a fair chance of it ! you see señor, I make free with your flask, and

you will excuse me I am sure, when you know the cause of my vexation."

" You are heartily welcome, friend, the wine was your own ; but what has so ruffled you ?"

" Look, there, señor, at those pitchers ranged in the corner."

" What are they ? where do they come from ?"

" Why, a present from the town council to this Prince of Liegnitz, which has been passed on here from 'the Holy Trinity' with an ironical message to wish me joy of my new customers. And precious customers they are likely to turn out !"

" My good host, a man of your evident liberal turn of character, should not care for such a trifling matter as this. Those captains, even should they drink this provision of wine, will like your's all the better for it, for it is not likely to be of the best."

" No, that's some consolation. It is sure to be sour and poor. But those fellows will

swallow any trash, particularly as they have not to pay for it, and they'll get through these thirty measures of a gallon and half each before they'll call for a single stoup from my cellar."

"They'll most likely give them to the poor."

"Not they, my brave señor. They are themselves as poor as rats for all their swaggering. I've just learnt that they did not give a groschen to the town sergeant who saw their luggage safe up from the river to 'the Holy Trinity' last night, and that a crown and a half was the whole sum they distributed among the porters, and that this morning they have offered a broken-winded gelding and an old spavined mare as security for their last nights' bill Alas ! señor, it had been an unlucky day on which they set foot in my house, were it not that the same sun saw the glory of your excellency honouring it with your presence."

"Well, well, remember you have a sum in hand, and I will, to a certain extent, hold you harmless for these gentlemen's demands. Me-

thinks, after all, this wine present is a very shabby one, and I should not be surprised if the prince returned it contemptuously to the corporation, or broke up the pitiful pitchers which contain it."

" Well, señor, I hope he may; and even that would be better than was done by a certain Count Starberg, two years gone, who drank the wine and carried off the silver tankards with him on his way to the Flemish wars."

" Did he, indeed?"

" Aye did he, señor, to the great disgrace of his rank; and since that day the council only sends what is not worth being stolen to those passing gallants."

" They are wise methinks, and you will be so too, mine host, to keep your temper as they keep their tankards. Here is a piece of coin for your Malvoisie—never mind the change. It can go to the servants. I shall be back anon, and in the mean time do all due honour to the young cavalier above stairs."

The aforesaid young cavalier, having called the servants, roused his varlet, dressed and breakfasted, found himself marvellously uncomfortable in the confinement of his sombre and solitary chamber ; and hearing just underneath loud talking, laughing, and other signals of company, he, after various efforts at restraint, resolved to go down into the public room. On descending he found it occupied by two or three groups, who, seated at different tables, had begun the serious occupations of the early dinner, usual at the hour of noon even unto this day throughout Germany. Tobacco had not, happily for the community, then come into use in Europe, and its stupifying effects shed no drowsy halo round the broad disk of German conviviality. Men talked and looked, of course, with much more vivacity and gracefulness than they possibly can under the odious influence of this worst of weeds, and no one was then (as he who smokes not is now) obliged to stand aloof from the loathsome impurity of

his neighbour's breath. Christopher de Mansfeldt came up, therefore, fearlessly close to four or five military-looking men, who were jocosely talking together, and who seemed evidently waiting till their mid-day meal was ready. They looked for a moment or two at the handsome and gaily-dressed figure of the young stranger, and exchanging salutations with him proceeded in their discourse, as he moved away towards a window which looked into the street."

"This is always the way with you, Zirchen," said one of the officers, "you run down the reputation of women and disparage their beauty without mercy. If that languishing-looking girl had been more favourably impressed with the beauty of your long red beard yesterday, you had given her a kinder word this morning."

"Not I, by Saint Mark! It was clear to me and to every one but you that she only waited a word on my part to give me every return I was likely to ask for, but you were jea-

lous, comrade, of her evident preference," replied the other, turning his hand through his meteor-beard which we have before called into notice.

"Preference, Zirchen ! that is the worst libel you have yet uttered on the damsel's good taste. She is indeed a lost creature if she could choose to enlist under such a fiery banner as you hang out. But I did not stand in your way, though I might perhaps. I will leave it to Koller if I did not from the first fix on the lass in the blue bodice and Mechlin point, as the loveliest of the group."

"What, she whom the elector threw such amorous looks at?"

"The same. And I meant plainly to tell her my mind, until I saw his highness's reverence steal his hand round her waist, while they entered the tent together, and press her to him as devoutly as though she had been a penitent in a confessional. She *is* a perfect piece of beauty!"

"Did you hear her name amongst the rest?" asked Koller, the person appealed to.

"Yes," observed Zirchen, "one of the women called her Agnes, and Count Scotus told Ritter Heinrick she was a Mansfeldt."

"Then he lied, sir, whoever he be! and whoever repeats his calumny is a villain!" exclaimed the young cavalier, striding forward and fiercely clapping his hand to his rapier's hilt. The captains looked somewhat confounded at this interruption to their conversation, while the dinner groups suspended their operations and gazed and listened.

"Yes, a liar and a villain, and I will prove it at my sword's point, with whichever or how many of this company as may make the quarrel their own," resumed the youth, more angry at the silence which met his first sally.

"These are hot words and hard ones, young sir," said Zirchen, seizing with a double twist the favourite plaything that floated from his chin upon his breast; "and depend on it their

digestion will not be easy, by and bye, when you are forced to eat them."

" They and my sword-blade shall choke you first, and every one of your slanderous fellows who dares to speak lightly of a virtuous lady and a noble house. Give me your name, sir, and his whom you quoted erewhile."

" My name is Zirchen, and my friend whom you have so politely christened liar, is called Von Sweinishen. As you will have to account with two of us at least, you will let me know to whom we are indebted for the opportunity of a little after-dinner exercise."

" You and your friend shall find me ready now—on the spot—but I do not choose to give my name to the loose keeping of such scandal-mongers."

" And do you think that noble gentlemen will condescend to measure blades with an unknown bully, in a quarrel to which he dares not avow his title?"

" Bully! Unknown! By Heavens, me-

thinks you give me good cause of quarrel on mine own account ! and I accept the gage. Draw then on the spot, and follow me out into the court-yard. We must not interrupt those gentlemen's dinner. And I claim the courtesy of seeing that I meet fair play, at the hands of any one here present."

At these words the rapier of which the reader has heard so often was pulled clean out of its scabbard, and the various persons present stood up, with as various objects and feelings ; Don José and the servants rushed in from the kitchen ; and the pugnacious champion of his sister's honour, or rather the angry avenger of what he believed to be its lost lustre, was walking out of the public room to the court-yard, followed by the reitre captains, who could not refuse his summons, when he was met by Scotus, entering the house hurriedly from the street.

The prompt eye of the Italian read much of what had passed, in the angry bearing of de Mansfeldt and those who followed him. He

saw clearly that his impatient temper had hurried him into a quarrel; and his first anxiety was to get him clear of its consequences, for the present at least.

"Well met, my friend, you are just the man I wanted, to witness the chastisement of my sister's slanderer," said Christopher.

"His sister!" exclaimed one of the captains.

"Aye, any one might have seen the likeness who was not half drunk yesterday," replied another.

"What is all this about? I must beg leave to ask the particulars before the affair proceeds further," said Scotus.

"When it is finished you shall have every explanation, count," answered Zirchen, "it is enough that this nameless young braggart has chosen to take umbrage at a light joke, relative to one of the ladies of the party yesterday, and that his insulting language to me and others demands the atonement of his blood."

"Gentlemen, I implore ye to pause for one

moment. . There is evidently a mistake all through—no offence could be meant to an unknown person by a mere reference to another. You must admit that, Count Christopher? You will allow, Captain Zirchen, that the hurt feelings of a relative is a fair excuse for a hasty word or two?"

"I admit nothing; I allow nothing," said the two angry men, respectively.

"One thing at least I must insist on," replied Scotus, pressed for time and seeing the intractable materials he had to deal with—"that your combat is put off for a couple of hours. Ye are both right I am sure—in your opinions. The most honourable men may see the same question in different points of view."

"Ah, here comes Ritter Heinrick, he will now take up his own quarrel," exclaimed Koller.

"Not till mine is avenged," said Zirchen, sullenly; and two or three of the captains gathered round their newly-arrived comrade to

explain the matter of the dispute. Scotus, from his short conversation with Von Sweini-shen the previous day, was convinced that he was the most manageable of the party ; and our readers have already had an instance of his prudent temper in the matter of the bargain with the hostel-keeper. The Italian accordingly advanced towards him, and begged the favour of a moment's conversation apart, which was readily conceded by Ritter Heinrick, who had keenly observed the influence of the count at Bruhl. De Mansfeldt consented to wait awhile, but sternly refused to sheathe his sword, and he strode up and down the court-yard, while his adversaries, in a group in one corner of it, talked over the conditions of the expected duels.

“ Thank God I have alighted on one wise man at last,” was the beginning of Scotus’s appeal to the Ritter Heinrick ; “ and I reckon on your aiding me to put a stop to this foolish brawl. But in the first place let me throw this

chain round the neck which should never have been despoiled of its ornament had I been closer at hand when you made your bargain within here. Not a word of question, I insist on it; I must be peremptory, and you must be generous enough to pardon me. The chain is your's again, and you have a credit with the hostel-keeper for two hundred crowns, which shall be doubled if you need it. And now to the affair in question. This young man, Count Mansfeldt, brother of the elector's chosen mistress and himself his prime favourite, has got into some mad dispute with your comrades here. Ghebhard Truchses would rather lose a regiment than that a hair of his head should be touched. If, then, the elector's friendship is worth securing you will hush this business up. Calm down that fiery-bearded and furious tempered Zirchen, while I take de Mansfeldt off. Urgent business requires his absence for an hour or two—perhaps for the whole evening. But if nothing but fighting can be done, I pro-

mise you you shall have him to-night or to-morrow at latest, to do with him what you like."

A few words from Von Sweinischen sufficed to satisfy Zirchen and the rest with the proposed arrangement ; and on Scotus explaining to de Mansfeldt that he had smoothed the way for his immediately seeing the elector, and that the captains would wait for the settlement of the quarrel till his more important business was completed, he consented to put up his weapon and withdraw from the scene. The Italian, therefore, took him under his arm and walked him from the ground, the obsequious salutations of the one forming a strong contrast to the haughty looks thrown out by the other.

The majority of the captains paid no great attention to the difference of manner. But Ritter Heinrick, fixing his sharp grey eyes on Scotus, muttered to himself,

" This overwhelming civility and wondrous

generosity must have some object ! That cunning Italian is not a man to throw away his money or his smiles for nothing. We shall see ! If he thinks he has bought a dupe for a few hundred crowns, he may find himself mistaken."

The arrival of the prince and the rest of the officers was followed immediately by the appearance of dinner.

And now the scene of our story shifts once more to the place in which it first opened.

CHAPTER VII.

WITHIN a few minutes after the scene related in the last chapter old Karl Kreutzer stepped as briskly as he could from his lodge, and threw open the large gates which were under his guardianship, for his accustomed ear had caught the sounds of carriage-wheels and instantly knew them to be those of the elector's, whose almost daily visits had already produced a considerable addition to the porter's perquisites. It was indeed Ghebhard Truchses who now arrived, in all the flush of feeling already described, with heart and mind in unison for the avowal of the great decision he had irrevo-

cably formed, and trusting to the force of his passion for fitting words in which to offer to its object a share in all the dignities which he himself possessed, and was resolved, in despite of all dangers, to hold, with the entire possession of the heart without which the hand is but a barren gift. He was met in the court-yard by Baron Conrad ; an unusual circumstance, for he generally had discretion enough to keep out of the way to avoid being an interruption to the elector's visit. Truchses thought there was a wild expression on the face of his old friend. But he heeded it not. Nor was he sorry to meet him thus on the path of his triumphant project. With all his confidence there was mixed a strange and nervous fluttering that made him glad of even a check in his career. He was not just then susceptible to presentiments of ill. All his forethoughts had been hitherto of success and joy. But at a moment so critical as this he felt as though afraid to rush at once into the possession of his happiness ; and he hung

back, with a mingled sentiment made up of fear and shame.

"Why, Kriechlingen, my old friend, what ails you? Has some fresh bad news arrived since our conference erewhile, to damp the high spirits in which we parted?" said Truchses, in a gay and rallying tone as he stepped from the carriage.

"Verily, your highness, I am somewhat changed since then; and methinks you may divine the cause."

"By my honour, no. Explain, then, my good friend, but briefly. I would not be long delayed, for I am impatient to offer my respects to the ladies above, and details of business, be it what it may, can be entered on afterwards."

"I can, on occasion, as your highness knows, be a man of few words, and prompt action. Honour me then with a private moment in this saloon, before seeking to go further."

The elector's heart sunk; but he neither spoke nor looked the sudden pang of apprehen-

sion, which arose from the instinctive promptitude of love to fix on its own peculiar object every cause of alarm. He silently preceded Kriechlingen into the room towards which the latter pointed.

“ Speak now and quickly, Baron Kriechlingen,” said Truchses in a firm voice.

“ I will, sir,” replied the baron, with a tone of decision, and yet preserving his respectful bearing. “ I waive all profession of my deep and dutiful attachment to your highness, my sovereign, and I must presume still to say my friend.”

“ Still !”

“ Yes, after all I cannot doubt your highness’s regard for me personally, although a lapse of reflection may have led you to forget it—and though hurried away by passion—not that I am a man to preach an overstrict morality—nor one that may not—”

“ How is this? I cannot brook this torturing suspense? Tell me of Agnes—Is she well,

safe?—all this relates to her—I feel it as surely as though you spoke the truth with lightning speed. What means that smile? what would it imply? Speak out, Baron Kriechlingen—I command you to end this mummery and explain!"

"Then since it comes to this, your highness, and since you add insult to outrage," said the old soldier, stung to the quick, "I tell you plainly, though my head should answer for it, you have acted unlike a friend, unworthy a sovereign prince, and in no ways to do honour to your station, in violating the sacredness of my house and carrying off my relative and guest—I will not be stopped even by your highness—No, you force me to speak out, and by heaven you shall hear me!" continued Kriechlingen, placing his back against the door, as Truchses strove to interrupt him, and, finding that impossible, then moved with the intention of rushing from the chamber, "No, you shall not escape my reproaches. I tell your highness

again, with great respect, it was infamous ! I call on you to give back the Countess de Mansfeldt to my protection. Little did I expect this at your highness's hands—little did I believe that Ghebhard Truchses would sully the glorious place he was about to assume by an act like this. Shame, shame, your highness ! Have not your triumphs been enough ? Is not your character sufficiently established ? Was another victim required—one who might have done honour to your throne !”

“ By heavens thou art mad—Stark mad !” cried Truchses, silencing the vociferations of the baron, less by the loudness of his voice than by the terrible intensity of his look—“ Stark mad, or this is all meant to drive me so—or some bold treason is at work and has taken this monstrous form. At thy peril let me pass ! or by my mitre and sceptre both I'll tear thy rebel carcase in atoms ! Stand aside, I say again !”

But Kriechlingen kept his place firmly and replied—

"No, not even this well-feigned rage shall make me quit my post. Your highness is unarmed—there, take my sword and kill me if you doubt my allegiance—but I will not leave this spot alive, till you swear to resign back Agnes to my protection."

These words were accompanied by the action they expressed. The brave old baron drew his sword from its sheath and flung it on the floor. Truchses, looking on it and then on its owner, exclaimed,

"I am stupified, astounded by all this. What does it all mean? How durst you treat your sovereign thus, audacious old man? Who has put this base notion in your brain?"

"Who? your highness shall see, and sink with shame in seeing who. The time is come for confronting you with your accuser. This persistence in the foul wrong you have done to two noble houses, and to a maiden of matchless beauty and virtue, puts an end to all delicacy. Come forward now, most injured youth!"

On these words the door of a small cabinet was forced open, and Christopher de Mansfeldt, pale and trembling with passion, stalked into the room. At sight of this stranger, so formidable in his looks and gestures, Truchses stooped for the weapon he had at first rejected ; and retreating against the wall, he took an attitude of defence, and said, in his most lofty tone of defiance,

“ Who next ? Let them all loose, for this boy-bravo was never sent to vanquish me alone. Ah, Conrad Von Kriechlingen ! I was warned to trust to no man—but I never looked for this treachery at your hands. You were the very last from whom I expected treason. But never mind—out with your fellow-conspirators—I am ready for them all !”

The bitter tone of this reproach went direct to the old baron’s heart. He saw clearly there was no hypocrisy in it, but that the elector had turned his accusal upon him in the belief of his being leagued in some murderous design. The

shock of being so suspected brought him at once to reason ; and the feeling of the wrong done to his own honour opened his eyes to the conviction of his sovereign's innocence. He flung himself on one knee at Truchses' feet, and exclaimed with much emotion,

“ Yes, strike ! It is time for me to die, since hurried into a belief of my sovereign's guilt, my own honour is in its turn arraigned. I am not fit to live—I ask no pardon, let my punishment be ample and immediate. Why do you hesitate ? you have called me traitor— revenge yourself, then—and let this brother of Agnes de Mansfeldt explain our mutual mistake.”

“ Her brother ! ” said Truchses.

“ Yes, her injured and now desperate brother,” cried Christopher, advancing still closer, “ for I see the sway you hold over this weak old man. On myself I must now depend for justice. I call on you then to give back my sister—instantly, without a word—and then I claim at your hands prompt reparation for her

outraged honour. As your wife the blot upon her reputation may be forgotten or unknown, but nothing short of this will satisfy me or her. In both our names, in that of our long train of honourable ancestors, I call on you—and we must have justice!"

"Rise, Kriechlingen, rise! There is some strange mystery in all this," exclaimed the elector; when at the instant the door of the chamber was thrown open, and Scotus entered in great apparent astonishment and well-acted agitation. At this new intrusion Truchses felt a thrill that was not entirely caused by courage bent on a desperate defence. Something less intrepid was certainly mixed with it. During his whole intercourse with Scotus a feeling of fate had blended with every notion connected with the Italian. He ever wished to consider it a presage of good. But in spite of his daring enthusiasm a chill at times ran through the current of his confidence. And now the sudden burst which brought this individual be-

fore him, in the midst of a circumstance so dubious, was well adapted to try to the utmost the nerves of our agitated hero. His natural valour did not forsake him; for the start of surprise and doubt once over he grasped the sword more closely, and his feet seemed to fix themselves with increased firmness to the floor.

“I make no excuse for this intrusion,” said Scotus. “I heard high words—the household is alarmed—and I see enough to warrant all our apprehensions. Will your highness deign to explain this to me?”

“I am myself bewildered—it is I who must require explanation,” answered Truchses, greatly set at ease by the obsequious anxiety evinced in the Italian’s words and looks.

“Baron, what does this mean?” said the latter.

“Ask me nought, for I am overwhelmed with confusion and despair,” was the reply.

“Then to you, sir, I address myself—a stranger you would be here, did not your like-

ness to Countess Agnes prove you a Mansfeldt, and pronounce you her brother."

The cool impudence with which Scotus thus feigned ignorance of his person for a moment confounded the haughty youth ; and the Italian, whose chief magic lay in taking prompt advantage of circumstances, immediately approached him, and with gestures of remonstrance (while Kriechlingen was offering some new expression of remorse to the bewildered elector) he whispered him,

" Is this the way you have kept your promise to leave all to the baron—or at least to keep cool and be calm ? You have nearly ruined everything by your rashness ! not a word of reply—follow me immediately from this place—the household will seize you else, and then indeed all is lost—Agnes commands you to implicitly obey my advice—not a word, not a word—leave everything now to me, and all will yet be right."

Then, turning to Truchses, he said,

“ This young cavalier is conscious of his imprudence, and will, with your highness’s leave, now join me in seeking for his sister—no time is to be lost.”

“ What is the truth of this! where *is* his sister? again I ask, again I command a reply.”

“ I thought the baron had told your highness of the disappearance of Countess Agnes. This letter found on her dressing-table may explain the rest.”

Truchses recognised Agnes’s handwriting and snatched the letter from Scotus; and the latter, leaving him absorbed in its perusal, hurried Christopher from the room, followed by the wondering eyes of Baron Kriechlingen, who when he had fairly disappeared exclaimed,

“ Well, that *is* the wonder-master! none may resist his power. Verily, I believe he could lay spirits or cast out devils! What does your highness think of this? Can such power as that be a natural or a legal power? can there be any doubt”—

"Peace, peace, I say!" exclaimed Truchses, fiercely stamping and at the same time dashing on the floor the huge rapier which he had kept in his grasp, until disarmed by the intensioness of his feelings. Had his enemies sought him then he had been an easy prey. The baron silently took up his weapon, and replacing it in the scabbard began some muttering apology, but was interrupted by a fiercely uttered,

"Leave me! and at the peril of your head let no one dare to interrupt me!"

Von Kriechlingen hastened from the room, and repulsing the anxious inquiries of his daughters who had hurried down stairs, and motioning off the domestics who, attracted by the loud words within, thronged towards the bustling scene, he once more drew his rapier forth, and taking post in front of the door, he paced up and down, with desperate looks and vigorous tramp, more like some grim sentry before a prison cell than a devoted friend guarding the sacred person of his sovereign.

And we may now for awhile contemplate in fancy him in whose service this vigilant watch was kept—the haughty victor checked in his full career—the proud enthusiast stricken in his boldest flight—the noble-minded, the tender-hearted! Every feeling of his nature worked upon, his power controlled, his pride offended, his warmth, his tenderness, his eloquence all set at nought. For the first time in his life he had encountered a woman of sentiment and honour, who made no secret of her love yet fled from his. Others, 'tis true, had lured him on and laughed him off by turns, in the mean coquetry which plays with passion and makes love a sport. But arts like these had never deceived him—and never do deceive a man of mind. Such a one can even in passion's height see through the veil in which callousness is cloathed, and can separate the assumption of individual virtue from what is but the pride of sex, which like the pride of station is often stronger than even self-love; for, as a king will

pardon an offence against his person rather than a slight thrown upon his rank, so many a mistress refuses for the honour of her sex what she is inclined to grant for her own happiness. Ghebhard Truchses had met and studied many varieties of woman's feeling, and had a quick appreciation of all, and in the present instance he was keenly alive to the deep reality of the virtue of whose resolve he was now the victim.

But did he not, nevertheless, writhe in the smart of wounded vanity and slighted power? and swear to subdue and be revenged on the stubborn beauty who would read this lesson to his presumption? No, not one shadow of ungenerous thought passed through his mind. But while he perused over and over again the touching eloquence of her letter, warm tears of genuine joy dimmed every word.

Had Agnes thrown herself unreservedly into his arms he had not felt happier than in this moment of her avowed withdrawal from his

presence for ever. In the simple entreaty that he would forget her, he read the fiat for his eternal constancy—in the expressed renouncement of all claims upon his love he acknowledged the patent of her sovereignty. In every one of those exquisite phrases, where delicacy seemed struggling through despair, he could, he would see nothing short of a compact of mutual affection, a covenant of long-lasting bliss. The splendid infatuation in which he read that letter was one of the thousand tributes to love's mastery paid on that day—as there are and have been, on all days since the human heart was framed to throb with feelings fit for Heaven.

But the delight of these first moments soon vanished from the mind of Truchses. The sensation of Agnes's absence succeeded to them; at first vague and undefined, then bleak and chill, next piercing and almost maddening. The exclamation which accompanied the sudden thought that she was indeed gone, that she

might be lost to him, was more like the utterance of intense bodily pain than the sound of mental suffering. He started forward, and rushed from the saloon out into the corridor, where Von Kriechlingen kept his guard in stern obedience. At sight of this unexpected sentinel the elector recovered in some degree his composure, and wholly his presence of mind. It was not the dignity of the sovereign but the pride of the man which was aroused ; and paramount to all feelings was the dread of attracting observation towards Agnes, from anything peculiar in his own bearing when entering on the subject of her disappearance.

Yet he immediately made inquiries the most anxious and minute from the baron and his daughters, from the tire-women of Agnes and Duchess Anne, and from the several domestics. Nothing could be learned more than that the two friends had left the garden by the private door, two hours previously, without any suspicion having been excited of their intending

more than a not unusual promenade, until the hurried appearance of the young stranger who announced himself to the baron as Agnes's brother, a few minutes before the elector's arrival, with a positive assurance that his sister was in the secret possession of that dangerous personage and that his designs on her were of the most unequivocal baseness. Old Conrad, in congenial hot-headedness, taking fire at the supposed indignity done to his own honour as well as shocked at the peril to which that of his young kinswoman was exposed, took on himself the instant accusal of Truchses, with what result has been seen. Christopher, on his part, consenting to keep to his hiding place until called forth at the proper time, to enforce the demand of that reparation which Von Kriechlingen as well as himself had it so much at heart to obtain. But even then, had it not been for Agnes's letter, Truchses and the rest might not have had reason to suspect any lengthened absence on the part of the two

ladies, nor did he feel any doubt of his finding means to recover and bring them back, until it was ascertained that Ernest too was misssing. Then all Agnes's revelation touching that questionable brother rushed upon his mind ; and successive pangs of anguish followed quick, in the conviction that jealousy most monstrous, or an influence which he shuddered at, had urged on and enabled de Mansfeldt to pay him back with tenfold force the torture which he so triumphed in inflicting on this now hateful rival the preceding night.

It was then that deadly notions rushed through the elector's brain of the absolute necessity, for his own repose, of ridding himself of this fraternal obstacle to his happiness. But she! where was she? How was he to commence his search? In what way overcome the terrible resolution she had taken to give him up, how convince her that his very being hung upon her breath? What miracle of heaven was to interfere and shorten the misery that seemed doomed

to enfold him ? Where, where was he to seek her ?

In the distraction of his feelings he for almost the first time in his life felt that he had no power of self-relief. The idea of his being dependent on others was in itself great suffering. To wrestle with fate and place his foot upon the neck of the vanquished world, seemed ever to have been a want of his soul. Danger and difficulty he had often courted in the very wantonness of his courage—as a mere excitement. But that was on occasions of his own personal risk, when had he failed, he had failed alone, and when the interests of another, the most precious consideration to a man of sentiment, was uninvolved. In the present case, however, he felt far differently. To have regained his beloved one he would have confronted a thousand deaths ; but the dread of losing her by some imprudent effort for her recovery seemed to paralyze his plans as fast as they were conceived.

In this emergency his thoughts scattered wide and near in search of help. He thought of Nuenar, but shrunk back at the recollection of his cold and cynical turn regarding all affairs of the heart. Various officers of his household, some of his ministers, young Leckenstein, Von Heyen, even the Prince of Liegnitz, rose upon his anxious mind—but one man above all others seemed to fill each successive place, as those we have enumerated were from sundry reasons discarded. That one was Scotus. He alone possessed the power of fixing the elector's thoughts on this occasion ; for Truchses felt that to him alone were those thoughts no secret. The influence which the Italian had been for so many weeks incessantly twining round his generous dupe was now indeed supreme. For Truchses felt satisfied that without him he could accomplish nothing—with him everything. It was on him then that he fixed as his counsellor and confidant in this hour of utmost need. He recollects his having gone with this new and

more formidable, but less repulsive, brother of Agnes in her search. But he had an instinctive feeling that the Italian would not abandon him in such a crisis. And having exchanged many a cordial hand-pressure with his stanch friend the baron and his daughters, and encouraged him and his servants to persevere in the search they now prepared for, he resolved to return to the palace, and await with such substitute for patience as he might best succeed in creating, the appearance of him who was now more than ever the incarnate personification of his fate.

CHAPTER VIII.

WE will not attempt to describe minutely the tumult of feeling which agitated our hero for some hours after his return to the palace. The desperate resolves for the recovery of his lost mistress, the cruel doubts lest a covert delicacy had prevented her stating the personal repugnance which might after all have urged her escape from him, misgivings as to his age, his power of gaining such a heart as her's, the dread of some secret rivalry, horror at the notion of Ernest's influence—all this must be imagined, and may be by those who have endured the chequered feelings of adventurous love. But for all this and a thousand nameless

other perplexities of thought, which float as thickly in the enamoured mind as motes in the sunbeam, there was still a remedy to which Truchses, with a lover's instinct, constantly turned. Agnes's letter, breathing the very life of truth, was ever before him, on his table as he sat, or in his hand as he perturbedly paced his chamber, and in its contents he found consolation and hope, as surely as the believer assailed by religious doubts finds safety in the inspired oracles of his faith.

The elector had given strict orders that no one on any pretext was to be allowed to interrupt his privacy, and that none but Walram should approach his person that day except Count Scotus, for whose immediate introduction as soon as he might return to the palace the valet was prepared. And long and heavy seemed the hours to Ghebhard's burthened mind ! His dinner was served, but though his pride made him assume the air of heroism even to his valet, and though he consequently went

through the forms of the table rather than appear overpowered by his feelings, the viands left it, nearly untouched, and he soon retired again into the private closet, where within a few short weeks he had passed hours of solitude more exciting and more sacred than the whole experience of his former life had afforded. Walram, who knew his master's ways and often anticipated his wishes, took care to place the wine-flasks now within his sight and reach. And with those companions, whose sympathy was ever ready and often appealed to, did Truchses plunge through the tide of time, tossed to and fro like a reeling ship in a heavy sea. Evening had now set in. The tortures of suspense became almost intolerable. He was over and over on the point of summoning his household officers, and ordering out his servants—his troops—his subjects *en masse*—for the discovery of the lost treasure. But that innate feeling of delicacy towards her, which in the first instance made him leave those

measures to the care of her brothers and her host, bore him up through all, and his greatest impatience now was for the tardy-coming night, when he might himself unobservedly rush forth in search, where or how he knew not, yet feeling as if his labours could not fail of success. He swallowed bumper after bumper—to calm, to stimulate, to temper, to excite—he found new excuses for every excess. Yet he felt no immediate change as the consequence of his large potations. It seemed to him as though he might drain an ocean of wine and yet be sober. And often during these wild hours of lone intemperance he paused and asked himself if he were indeed not drunk? and he strove to call up in calm array his inmost feelings and pass them in review. To these successive questionings he always answered no. But each effort for self-examination was baffled, by the very breath of the rising thoughts which dimmed their own reflection in his mind's mirror. All was confusion. And the anarchy had in a little more

been complete had not Walram ushered in without ceremony, the individual who alone had power to arrest the torrent by which Truchses was carried away.

"At last, at last?" exclaimed the elector, starting from his seat "you are come—you have then found her? she is safe?"

"Alas, no," replied Scotus, eyeing keenly the ingenuous countenance now in full play before him. "Safe I trust she may be, but we have not found her—yet do not despair. A great mind rises against difficulties—"

"To be crushed, perhaps, the more surely by their fall! Not found! Where have you sought? What has been done? And her brother—he I mean who burst on me to day, in her likeness, but as the angry phantom of a dream—where is he?"

"Worn out with fatigue and anxiety he now reposes, after having with me done all that man might do in such a case. Baron Conrad and his household, the city trained bands, the

town-officers are all on foot. The alert has been given at the barriers, scouts sent on every road—”

“ And all ineffectual? Then must I myself to the pursuit. I alone may snatch her from that fraternal tyrant who dares thus to thwart my love—and let him beware our meeting !”

“ Is this then the Elector of Cologne, the high dignitary, the prince of the empire, the champion of reform ! What ! *You* start out on an ignoble chase after a most unworthy as well as a most unnatural rival, to do what ? To put a mean brother to death, and thus throw an eternal barrier between yourself and *her* ! Is Agnes a woman to give her love to her brother’s murderer ? Nay, nay, such was the thought that spoke in that fierce look.”

“ It was, it was, I own it. But what needs the confession, you know my thoughts. Tell me, then, how to direct them to the great purpose of my soul—what must I do to recover my soul’s idol ? I *must* recover her or perish.”

“ You shall ! What power may thwart your will and mine ? What depth is dark enough, what world is wide enough to hide the object that *we* seek ? Where is the confidence of your noble nature ? do you abandon *that* ? ”

“ You are my hope, my most extreme reliance. Guide, counsel me—command me if you will—I swear obedience to your mastery.”

“ Drink then, let’s drink to our reciprocal allegiance—for I vow my utmost service to your will, and that will shall be accomplished.”

“ Walram ! more wine—quick, and with liberal hand. Aye, count let us pledge ourselves in wine. You promise her to me ? ”

“ She is already your’s. Separate but not dissevered, the invisible chain of sympathy binds ye together, in spite of time or space. Baulked and baffled for awhile, your triumph is not less secure. The stars that shone upon your respective births are now in conjunction brightening your united paths. Apart, ye travel to the same goal. Your hearts have the

same object, your minds are musical with the same tune. Every impulse of your being is her's. Every spring of her existence is identical with your's. You love and are beloved. No power can sunder the common purpose of your souls. To live for, with, and in each other is the essence of your destiny. What mortal power may violate the law of eternal fate! Aye you are right, drink freely, and be wise! Wine is the generous dew for love's rich harvest, which, blooming and fragrant, sends forth flower and fruit—drink, then, drink!"

" My lips are parched—and my mind burns with an insatiable thirst. The wine mounts to my brain, but the melody and perfume of your words mix with its luscious fumes. I must not drink more—I would only listen to you. Speak to me then, of Agnes, that I may grow ebriate with hearing her praise. She loves me then? and she shall be mine, again—now—and for ever? Tell me that delicious tale again. Speak to me of the stars, the heavenly arbiters of fate.

Do they indeed burn brightly on our love?
She loves me, she is mine!—But ah! where,
where is she? By the deep mystery of your
knowledge—by the deeper majesty of my love,
I conjure thee to tell me where is Agnes?"

" Does she not live in your heart's core? Is
she not twined, tendril like, through every fibre
of your being? What would you more?"

" I would have her here corporeally before
my burning eyes, that they might grow cool
again drinking in large draughts of beauty—I
would have her at my side—pressed close to
mine, that my heart might feel the bounding
throb of her's. I would have her in my ardent
clasp, that my lips might——" here the pure
sentiment of passion interposed, and checked
the exuberance of its own rapture.

" Here—I would have her here, that I might
lay my prostrate body at her feet, offer my
rank, my state, my soul for her acceptance—
make myself her's, make her mine, both indivisi-

ble—set fate at defiance, dare the angry world, and live or die, no matter which, with her !”

Every phrase almost was followed by another draught, and each new draught excited some fresh rhapsody. The wily Italian played his noble-minded and full-hearted puppet well. He did not mean to let him sink into unconsciousness. He measured the limits to which his mind might safely be allowed to wander ; and he found it easy by a word or look to lure it back again. Scotus talked wild and mysterious words, mingling the jargon and eloquence of science with fantastic analogies, all made to bear on the main object of Ghebhard’s extravagant passion ; and much that may not see the light was added, to inflame its ardour without risking to shock its delicacy. The voluptuous refinement of our hero’s mind was thus urged to its utmost bent. Desire and delicacy mingled together in a maze as wondrous as the union between mental and bodily feeling, and fixed on the same object as intensely as the

separate glances from two eyes centring in a common point.

"Then your resolve is firm," said Scotus, having raised the elector to the utmost verge of excitement—"you will risk all for the possession of her beauty?"

"I will do more, I say again—I will *sacrifice all*. She is mortal perfection to look upon! sense has no delight beyond that of her possession. Bring her to my arms, and I scatter to the winds all thought of power, all notion of ambition—but that of revelling in the rapture of her embrace. Oh, could I see her now, in the rich luxury of her charms!"—at these words Truchses, who paced the room in irregular movements, reeled to a chair, and placing both hands upon his brow, showed evidently he had reached the crisis between sobriety and intoxication. Recovering for a moment he fixed his look on his companion, and said,

"I am no longer master of myself—my brain turns round. Watch me, my friend, that I

commit no excess of word or thought against the divine object of my love. I would not for the world of joys combined in her possession dream even a notion unworthy of her purity. Guard me then against my overheated fancy—but still talk of her—picture her to me as she is, all beauty, grace, and symmetry, let her person rise again and again on my mind in the same voluptuous mist. Let her swim before me, let her breathe and live in imagined reality—Oh, powers of love and beauty, how ye wrap my mind!"

"Now, mark well my words," said the Italian, rising slowly and laying his hand, with light yet thrilling pressure, on that of Truchses; "words solemn as the holy spirits which you invoke, fulgent with truth and the power of my sacred art. You ask me to hold up this miracle of beauty to your fancied gaze; I will do more! What will you say, what do, if in yon mirror's broad reflection I raise the living image of your love, instinct with motion, senti-

ment and passion—glowing in all her charms, looking enchantments—as true as if her breathing form stood here before you?"

No sudden start, no phrenzied phrase of drunken wonderment answered this speech. Truchses clasped his hands together before him on the table, and looking full in the Italian's face, with eyes that seemed at once to speak a complete return of reason, he said in calm deep accents,

"Count Scotus, have you the power to do this?"

Scotus was for an instant overwhelmed with the fear that he had been too quick—that he had recalled his victim to himself, by the over-sudden proposition of a feat almost too magical for superstition's self to believe in. He paused, and watching with piercing look the face and form before him, he saw the colour go and come, and the lips quiver, and the broad breast heave, while the visible throbbing of the enthusiast's heart made his laced vestments shake

like an aspen in the wind. The elector passed his hands again across his eyes and brow. Scotus saw that all was safe. Then and then only he spoke again.

“ *I have* the power. But—but its practice must be purchased. The very depths of science were fathomed, the very heights of knowledge scaled before that mightiest triumph of art became mine own. Jerome Scotus need scarcely now reveal to Ghebhard Truchses that he lives by his skill, put forth for others’ happiness. The powerful sovereign must be generous if the poor magician is dexterous. The reward must be proportioned to the service. What price will your highness pay, to see the full-length image of Agnes de Mansfeldt, moving, breathing, living, in that glass ?”

“ Price !” exclaimed Truchses languidly, throwing himself back in his chair, while a smile wild and faint passed across his half-open lips, “ Who dares to fix a price upon such beauty, or may hope to purchase such skill Show

her to me as you say—and thus prove your power to work this miracle, and all I possess is yours—for then you can surely give her to me—*she, herself*—will you do that?"

"Even that may be within my power; but I must have time. Are you then content to wait"—

"Wait!" exclaimed Truchses, starting up again, "not for all the kingdoms of the world one single instant. Oh I am frantic at the thought you have raised! Take me off this cruel rack. You promised to show me the image of my love—you hesitate—ah, the reward! True—it is but just that such intense delight should be amply paid for. Here then," continued the elector, tottering towards a chest broadly clasped with iron, on which the longing looks of the Italian had many a time been fixed, and which was now opened wide before his avaricious gaze, "Here, from the heart of my private treasures, take what thou wilt, most admirable magician. Is this not gold? are

not these jewels? Help thyself freely—beggar me if thou wilt—to make me richer than the god of wealth in the mere sight of her blessed image."

"And for herself—for her own proper person, laid on your bosom, clasped in your circling arms?"

"Talk not of that, unless thy power can do it at once. It is too much for my reeling brain.—The glass, the glass! I gaze on it but see her not. Show her to me quickly, if thou wouldest not set me mad—I can endure no longer."

"One solemn promise now is all I exact from your honour," said Scotus, with both hands on the elector's breast—"strict secrecy as to this proof of my art, and its reward."

"I swear it," said Truchses, sinking once more upon a seat.

"Now then, in the name of the grand mysteries of sacred science, by virtue of the eternal secrets of the unknown world, I command you

Ghebhard Truchses to close your eyes, to let no rash, blasting weakness urge you to raise a lid until the word is given, on pain of instant death to yourself and her the object of this great experiment. May all the powers whose combined influence guides the mystic action of the spheres watch over and direct my poor efforts to complete success! are your lids closed?"

"Close as my hands may press them down—yet golden visions dance before my sight."

"'Tis the train of glorious spirits ushering in the bright image which my skill is about to raise. Be firm and steady—Look not until I pronounce her name—then let your full gaze fall upon the mirror—She will be there! But at your peril turn not to look at me!"

The elector spoke not. And then arose a strain of soft and magic-sounding harmony, as if a band of full-toned instruments breathed in the subdued mellowness of far, far distance. An exquisite odour filled the chamber. The

step of the Italian trod lightly and rapidly across the floor, and then returned. Some murmured incantation rolled indistinctly from his lips.

“ Now, Agnes, come !” said he, in accents of sweet blandishment, as though he strove to lure a spirit from its haunts in heaven.

At the word, Truchses, rapt in enchantment opened his eyes, wide, yet as if afraid of what he longed to look on, and fixed his trembling gaze upon the mirror. A light vapour gradually moved from before its face, and as it floated upwards a female form was visible, slow moving forwards. The lamp threw down its full light upon the reflected figure. It was indeed the form and face of Agnes, in the divine expression of graceful attitude and splendid beauty.

“ Eternal Heavens ! 'Tis she, 'tis she !” cried Truchses, bounding from his seat. At the instant the figure threw its hands upwards,

clasped them together, turned its head, and disappeared.

“Stay, stay!” exclaimed the elector, rushing forward with a shriek of delirious fervour; and just as he reached the mirror and was on the point of dashing himself against its surface a vigorous clasp enfolded him, and he fell senseless in the Italian’s arms.

“Hist! Walram, hist!” exclaimed the latter, in anxious yet suppressed impatience, for he feared to arouse his victim too soon, and there were others not far off whose attention he did not wish to excite. The valet came at the summons.

“To bed, to bed with him, good Walram. His highness has quaffed freely—but wine works well for noble natures and stirs up the generous juices—stay by your master—your care will meet its reward. Gently, gently—” and whilst speaking those words, Scotus assisted the valet to place the unconscious elector on his couch in the adjoining room. Leaving

to Walram the task of watching his returning sense, with strict orders not to quit him for a moment, and an assurance that he would speedily return, the Italian closed the door, and pausing for a few moments in the closet, he rapidly took whole handfuls of jewels from the strong box, and thrust them into the various pockets of his dress, rejecting the gold, as mere dross in comparison to the treasures within his grasp. He was soon literally loaded with precious stones to an immense amount of wealth ; and it was a grievous trial to his cupidity to leave anything behind. But a well known signal whispered him away. He quitted the closet, holding his cloak closely round him ; and at the door, still open, which led to the corridor communicating with his own apartment, he met his impatient secretary, fearing to come in, and almost breathlessly waiting the Italian's appearance.

“ Come, come quickly,” said the secretary in a panting whisper, “ She has fled affrighted to

the garden. Follow her or she may escape altogether."

" Let her fly, if she will—the tercel-gentle tied by a silken thread is not more surely in a prince's check than she is now in that of our brave elector."

" And he?"

" All right and royal; happy in the excess of love and wine. I've made glorious work of it!"

" Art thou sure and safe in all that has passed?"

" Kiss me, my Imogen! throw thy disguised person into my arms—and let thy heart beat against a bed of jewels. Look here, sweet one."

And with the words the Italian showed the inner folds of his vestments glittering with his precious spoils.

" This is indeed a harvest!" exclaimed his companion—" and now our work is done. Have I not served thee well, Jerome, throughout this great adventure?"

“Bravely. But all is not yet complete. Take these glittering baubles, my girl, and stow them safely in the brass-clasped casket. Then bring me the blue case with Duchess Anne’s—thou knowest the one I would have—On the instant, to the garden—I will be there. But tell me first how fares thy two noble guests, the brother counts?”

“Oh, marvellous well, in their separate solitudes. By working on the fears of one and stimulating the other’s courage, I have them tuned to thy utmost wishes.”

“And the duchess?”

“In my own chamber, nervously expectant.”

“Exquisite wench! what had I been without thy aid?”

“Alas, Jerome, I am but a weak fond woman, the creature of thy purpose.”

“The very essence of my art—for woman’s faith is the genuine grand magistry.”

“Art sure, Jerome, that all works well?”

“Yes, yes, so well that I am lost in wonderment.”

" Away, then, away ! risk nought by this foolish dalliance."

" Nay, nay—refuse me not. I wanted that kiss, my Imogen, to keep my courage up. Now for the bride!"

In a moment more the Italian was in the garden.

CHAPTER IX.

Scotus soon found the object of his search walking with agitated movement in one of the dark alleys. As his steps approached, she endeavoured to fly further into the shade. But he quickly overtook her, exclaiming as he advanced,

“ Fear nought fair countess, it is only I, Scotus, your friend’s friend—and your own, as I will prove on the instant.”

“ My friend, Count Scotus! how can you profane the word? How durst you practice this concerted trick upon me? Why was I led here under a base and false pretence, to be ex-

posed to such indignity ? Where is the Duchess of Saxe-Coburg ? Lead me to her instantly, that I may fly this place."

" The brilliant eyes of Agnes de Mansfeldt flashed through the darkness with pride and courage as she spoke, and her figure drew up to its utmost strength.

" Countess," replied the Italian, " your whole happiness, your fame are in my hands—I have alone the power—"

" I hold your power and your impostures in utter scorn. Led away by a rash zeal for my friend's interest I consented to come here, to plead to your honour and your feelings for her sake—and what have I found you ? A mean pander to purposes of my disgrace. Lead me to Duchess Anne, and forth from these grounds, that I may seek my brother and my friends. I command you to do so, and you dare not disobey me. Oh, God ! another footstep ! He is coming—I cannot bear this"—

" No, by every oath in heaven's calendar, he

is unconscious even that you are here," cried Scotus, gently seizing Agnes's arm. " He saw your reflection in the glass, 'tis true ; when by pure accident he broke upon my privacy—but in the heat of his intense passion he believes it a vision of his brain. He is this moment insensible—to all things but the anguish of having lost you."

" Insensible ! oh, heavens, then, does he suffer so—does he indeed think of me thus ?"

" Earth does not hold a being more wretched than Ghebhard Truchses this moment. Oh, Countess Agnes, let me plead his cause—"

" Who, then, is this that comes ?" exclaimed Agnes, affrighted, as a figure approached.

" Only my faithful attendant, who received you in the palace erewhile, and bearing, as you will see, the accomplishment of the purpose which brought you here. 'Tis well," added Scotus, taking a case from the hands of his silent messenger—" Return to the duchess, and say that Countess Agnes will rejoin her instantly.

And now, fair countess, incomparable and irresistible as you are, be not astonished that I have divined the object of your visit, on this night of momentous influence to your own fate and that of so many whom you hold dearest of all the world. Look here—see those gems, which shine not with a thousandth part the lustre of your own eyes—which are not a millionth part the price at which I value your good opinion. These are your friend's jewels, safe as I received them from her in trust for the attainment of her own happiness. Thank heaven I have accomplished that, without the sacrifice of the smallest diamond-drop of her rich casket ! Take it, then, in your own hands—and place it back in her's—and tell her—you may do so boldly—that within two days her adoring and repentant husband will be in her arms and her own destiny be complete."

" This is, indeed, an overpowering surprise," said Agnes, taking the open casket, and letting her eyes rest on the brilliant galaxy of its con-

tents. “ How knew you the purpose which brought me here ? ”

“ Press not what is now a worthless question, fair countess ; you have the treasure, and I the reward. Believe me to be honest, and I am satisfied to be *thought* ignorant.”

“ Oh, Count Scotus, you have indeed read the stars to some purpose ! ”

“ The stars I read the best are woman’s eyes, and those I gaze on even now unfold a wondrous mystery of virtuous self-sacrifice. Shall I go on, and speak all I would speak, countess ? ”

“ I can put no sure construction on those vague words,” replied Agnes, shrinking in the fear that all her thoughts were indeed exposed to the penetrating skill of the Italian.

“ Then I will leave nothing to doubt,” continued he, “ one minute of time to-night is more precious than years of your whole life. Trust me when I tell you so, and now listen. You would, from a bright but meteor motive of virtue, ruin your own happiness in the belief

that you are saving that of him who is now and for ever a part and parcel of yourself. You may attempt to fly from, to forget him—in vain, in vain. The glances of those beaming eyes which fall together on one central point are not more inseparable than the fate of Ghebhard Truchses and your own. 'Tis written above, below, in heaven and earth—ye are one and the same for ever ! Now, even while I speak to you"—and at these words the Italian raised his arms with the slow imposing motion of pretended inspiration, as he turned his looks up towards the glimmering starlight—"this very instant I see the light of returning consciousness revealed to your lover's brain. He throws out his ardent gaze to find you present—his bosom pants to know that your's heaves in sympathy with his—and he is right—he is assured. The blessed balm of confident affection is in both your hearts this moment, healing all wounds, and offering incense to love's power ! Then hesitate no more —give yourself to my guidance. Come, Agnes,

come—and let me lead you to that surest heaven of happiness, a faithful lover's arms!"

As the Italian accompanied these words with an attempt to lead Agnes with him, she started back and repelled him with both hands. The questionable nature of his proposal aroused the whole strength of modest apprehension within her, and she exclaimed, clasping her hands and looking to heaven,

"Oh, why am I exposed to this seduction! where are the natural guardians of my weakness, to shield me in this hour of trial!"

The cunning Italian saw that his point was gained. He had touched her feelings in their keenest sense, and all in favour of his object. He promptly followed up his advantage.

"You doubt me, you have some misgivings, as to the nature of my thoughts!" said he, in a tone of reproachful regret. "Have I deserved this? Hear me then awhile. The feeling that urged you to come here this night, as you believed on your friend's errand, was the spell of

your own destiny. I am but an instrument in the hands of fate which points the way. But *he*, he waits with throbbing heart and open arms, to receive his heaven-destined bride, to offer his rank, his state, his soul for her acceptance. I speak his very words—the words he has authorized me to repeat. Can you, then, hesitate to become the wife of this powerful prince, this impassioned lover? I woo you in his name."

Agnes felt the full influence of this speech, uttered with every possible effect of emphasis and accent. Her head swam and her heart beat high. The word *wife*, with all its magic host of bright associations, seemed ringing in a thousand echoes in her mind. The Italian's magical power over other's thoughts was never more clearly proved; but in this case, as in most others, the spell was in the predisposed state of feeling on which he worked. Scotus waited awhile, and then resumed,

" Ah, will not those stubborn and mistaken virtues yield to their own happiness! What

more can I say? Would your two brothers' united influence accomplish what I cannot?"

"Oh, would that Christopher were here!"

"And Ernest, would not he, too, sanction your marriage?"

"Alas, I fear he never would!"

"You *fear* his refusal—then you wish for his consent?"

"I did not say so—I meant not to go so far—to give expression to any wish but for my brother's presence."

"Praise to the power that makes me the poor means of meeting any wish of a being like you. Your brother Christopher is now, this very instant, in yonder palace, with heart and soul intent on the accomplishment of your marriage!"

"Here! Christopher here! oh, you sport with me too far, Count Scotus—spare me this excessive trial."

"By Heavens I speak the truth! one mi-

nute shall see you in his arms, if you will but return to my apartments."

"And Ernest?"

"Ere your embraces of one brother are unclasped I will bring the other to you."

"But he, alas! will only thwart what that other might hope to effect."

"Leave that to my care, lovely countess; I promise you that Ernest himself shall this very night consent to, at least, if he does not prove the most strenuous to urge, your marriage with the elector."

"Be this influence over others the gift of nature or the work of magic you are indeed most wonderful!" exclaimed Agnes, now taking the Italian's proffered arm. She stepped forward with him in the direction of the palace, but before she had proceeded a dozen yards the intensity of her various feelings became too much for her. She faltered and stopped; and leaning on Scotus for support, she at length burst into a flood of tears.

What thoughts, what wishes, what intentions flashed in quick coruscations on the dark mind of the Italian, while this beautiful and innocent being sobbed convulsively on his shoulder, his arm insidiously around her, and the mellowed richness of her figure thus almost within his very clasp? Whatever they might be, the rapid sensitiveness of Agnes was in a moment or two aroused, either by her own innate perceptions, or by some not-to-be-mistaken evidence of emotion on his part. The effect on her was a curdling thrill of disgust; but not from mawkish prudery, or unwomanly coldness. For be it remembered that four-and-twenty hours previously she had received and given back, with unscrupulous delight, the impassioned embraces of another.

A very few minutes more saw Agnes in one of the Italian's suite of rooms; the well known blue-embossed and silver mounted casket fairly in the Duchess of Saxe Coburg's hands, and she gazing through tears of joy, first on her re-

covered treasures then on the beloved friend who had restored them to her, and dividing on both kisses which had all the warmth of full-grown ardour mixed with the levity of childhood.

This scene was soon broken in upon, by the entrance of Christopher de Mansfeldt ushered in by Scotus. A mutual exclamation of delight burst from both brother and sister as they rushed into each others' arms, almost doubting this realisation of their intense longing. Scotus and the *secretary* immediately retired; and while the latter kept a sort of running watch, between the door of the chamber which contained the delighted group, and that of the elector's closet which opened into the corridor, the Italian had proceeded to the room which had served for Ernest's long day of prison.— He entered and found the latter worn out with anxiety, yet almost wild with joy at seeing his self-named patron again.

“ Ah! my friend, how have I laboured in

your service—and alas, I fear how hopelessly!" exclaimed Scotus, hastily receiving Ernest's embraces, and flinging himself as if utterly exhausted on a couch.

"I know all you would ask me," resumed he, giving Ernest no time for inquiry or remark—"I *have* found her, after a long day of search, and *where* think you? why in this very palace, where she came voluntarily, of her own good will, and where at this moment, in league with the Duchess Anne and your brother Christopher, she is making preparations for the wedding."

"Oh, Agnes, Agnes! Lost to me then for ever," sobbed forth De Mansfeldt, sinking on a chair and looking so lamentable that the Italian could scarcely have commanded his countenance at any time less pregnant with eventful matter.

"Aye, for ever and ever," said he briskly, "if you have not nerve, moral nerve enough to enter into a plan which I have formed, and to carry it through."

"Oh, tell it to me, I am ready for anything that may secure my sister to me."

"In the first place, then, you must deny—and if you choose you may root the fact out of your mind—that she *is* your sister."

"How! Agnes not my sister!"

"Now tell me honestly, Count Ernest, have you never felt something whispering loudly in your heart that you were not a Mansfeldt?"

"Not a—"

"That the warm blood whose eddies boiled eternally towards Agnes was not the same by nature as that with which it longed to mix? That christian men love not their sisters with a carnal love? That religion shrinks aghast, and that morals would hide their face, from the spectacle of a brother binding his own flesh and blood in a vow which falls little short of a marriage contract?"

"A marriage—"

"That you never could have done all this—that nature had revolted within you at the very

first step, had you not been in fact an alien to the noble house you represent—of rank *more* high perhaps, that matters not—but one removed in infancy from your own natural cradle, and surreptitiously placed in one that was not your birthright? Some wandering Egyptians were the most likely agents in this foul transaction, which gave you, 'tis true, the inheritance of a fine title and an estate nine-tenths squandered, but robbed you of the rapturous right to make Agnes de Mansfeldt your bride, a possession worth the empire! Have you had no warnings of all this? Are you not now ready to act on it? Answer me quickly, or you are too late—Time flies."

"I cannot, Count Scotus, answer such a wild mass of fiction heard now for the first time. I cannot see your drift—"

"Then, by Heavens, I cannot find eyes for one so blind! But at any rate you can hear—then mark me! Your incestuous designs on Agnes—nay hear me out—will be to-morrow

the common talk of Germany, her best excuse for flying to the elector's arms, the total blasting of your character ! I offer you a plan and my assistance for your own justification, and the possession of that model of beauty for which you pine and die, despite of all your pious resistance to the passion which consumes you."

"Count, count, this is monstrous—I feel no passion, nothing of the kind—"

"You do, you do, my friend, although you know it not. I see this moment the false lustre of eye which carries death to the possessor. I mark you shrivelling away in the fierce struggle—"

"I have no struggle—"

"Yes, yes, you have, and you sink fast under it. Will you then brave religious scruples, the world's scorn, her own repugnance, and carry her off—I have the means at hand—forcing her to the bridal bed, and then we can easily forge documents that nothing may gain-

say—you know my skill already to prove the whole of what you call a fiction, and secure you the bliss you so well merit, and so desperately languish for?"

"Oh, gracious Heaven protect me from this frightful plot!" exclaimed the terror-stricken de Mansfeldt, springing up and striding to the furthest corner of the room. "I feel my blood running cold, and my heart is cramped. Oh, what a hideous proposition you have made to me! Can this really be Count Scotus, the sworn friend of my family, who suggests this diabolical scheme? Has my conduct indeed brought down those accursed imputations on myself, those frightful suspicions on Agnes? Oh, let me lose her for ever, sooner than risk this terrible stigma—let me at once deliver myself up to the vengeance of her libertine seducer—let me be racked with a thousand deaths, to expiate this even involuntary guilt! Has my pure affection merited this construction? Has my life given warrant for it?

Count Scotus tell me what could have put all this into your head?"

" My knowledge of the human heart—you may not be aware of what is working in your's," replied the Italian coolly.

" Good God! Can I be such a wretch? Better then to die at once, and rid my dear sister of such a monster from her path of life!"

" Much better to help her on with a brotherly hand; to give her to the man who only waits your consent to wed her honourably and endow her richly; to forward your own fortune in insuring her's, and free ye both from the dead weight of an engagement which, but to yourselves, carries a damning evidence of guilt."

" I agree in every word—but what has changed you so? You who so strenuously opposed this marriage?"

" No matter, no matter, I did not then know what the world said of you, or what you really felt or intended, or—but that is no matter now.

Will you act up, and on the spot, to your present conviction, and join your sister and your brother, and your common friend the duchess, and meet the enamoured elector by and bye, to give a joint consent?

“ Oh, yes, willingly, anxiously—there is nothing else left for me but this desperate alternative. But do you think me safe in trusting myself to Truchses? Will you promise me your protection?”

“ To be sure I will, against man or demon—but in this case you need it not. Now let us lose no time.”

Ernest traversed a couple of chambers with the Italian for his guide, not quite unapprehensive of some lurking enemy behind the loose and faded tapestry; but his heart swelled with joy when he heard the voice of his brother in a neighbouring room; and the moment that saw him once more embracing Agnes—and with a feeling more really fraternal than ever he knew before—was perhaps the happiest he had ever passed.

A scene of rapid discussion and brief explanation took place. Scotus took care to mix in and manage it in just such a way as to leave his own conduct in an apparent aspect of candour, cleverness, and general benevolence, in which every individual present with Ernest's exception was disposed to view it; and as for him, he was now of too small importance to the great result to make his opinion of any material value.

CHAPTER X.

IT was exactly twelve o'clock on the night of the transactions just recorded, when Johan Hilpaert the chief burgomaster of Cologne, Herman Oppenheim his colleague, Ludwig Bender and Christian Zomerhausen two of the town council, and the learned syndic of the city, met in select and secret conclave in one of the private rooms of the town house, to debate on certain matters of moment, touching the electorate at large and the interests of the city in particular. These worthy burghers were among the most determined enemies of Ghebhard Truchses, and the system of which he was the enlightened and persevering patron. They were thorough-

going conservatives, sturdy sticklers for the preservation of abuses on which they lived and thrrove; and on all possible occasions endeavouring to confirm others in the prejudices which they had inherited from their forefathers for several generations.

"Well, my good masters," exclaimed the chief magistrate, as he entered the room where the others were assembled, "Here I am, punctual as the clapper which strikes midnight this very moment on the great bell of St. Genevieve."

"And as noisy as the one and as empty as the other," whispered Oppenheim to the syndic (for jealousy and envy found its way into the feelings of those political associates) while the rest welcomed the new comer and complimented him on his being so well up to time.

"Now, fellow-citizens," resumed the burgomaster, "let us to the subject of debate, for truth to tell frau Hilpaert looked with an angry eye when I left my house, and vowed she would sit up till my return."

“ The worthy dame knows well your truant ways, neighbour Johan,” said Zomerhausen, with a chuckle.

“ Aha ! friend Christian, art thou satirical and slanderous to-night ? Take care, take care that I do not retort, and give a hint to your good dame about the little Jewess close to the Kirch-gasse.”

“ I defy your worship, I defy you—I am well known to hate the whole race of Jews, and more especially the father of little Zillah.”

“ Yes, and like a good Christian thou makest amends to the daughter for thy ill-will to the sire—is not that it ?”

“ Whatever you like, your worship, I can bear all your raillery, for I can truly say I never keep *my* frau waiting.”

“ Then thou art a miracle of a man, friend Christian, and thy wife may well be called a well-served gentlewoman.”

“ Good, good ! give over neighbour Zomerhausen—you’ll get nothing but hard knocks in

an encounter of wit with his worship—good, good ! ha, ha, ha !” exclaimed Ludwig Bender, a constant feeder at the burgomaster’s table, the official laugher at his jokes, and the defender of all his measures in the council.

“ Methinks this light talk is scarcely meet for the serious business we have in hand, brother Hilpaert,” said Oppenheim, with a scowl.

“ Tut, tut ! brother Herman, don’t look so grave, or throw a gloom over the star-light which was just clearing the heavens as I came in. We must to business, with gay hearts, clear heads—”

“ And comforted stomachs, say I,—your worship will pardon the interruption—and therefore I commend ye all to this bowl of spiced hippocras,” said Zomerhausen.

“ A happy thought, friend Christian, and the cordial is even less likely than your worthy helpmate to be kept waiting,” replied Hilpaert, dipping a glass into the bowl.

“ Good, good ! your worship’s wit flows

freely to-night," cried Bender, following the example.

" And thou, kind Ludwig, art I see, as ready as ever to draw thine at the same source."

" Ha, ha, ha ! good, excellent good !"

" The wine or the wit, Master Bender ?" growled Herman Oppenheim.

" Both, most respected second burgomaster," replied the parasite, " The one comes from his worship's cellar and the other from his brain ; and let me tell you that each is, in its way, the fountain head."

" Which is a good place whereat to draw water, but scarcely so for wine, Ludwig," said Hilpaert, helping himself again.

" Ha, ha, ha !" chuckled Bender, " but while your worship drinks after this fashion, and the good wine mounts to your head, you need not fear water on the brain, at any rate."

" Pray, pray, brother Hilpaert, let us stop the filtering of this foolery and proceed to busi-

ness," cried Oppenheim, impatiently, and emptying the glass which he too had filled.

"To business, then, to business, but let us keep our tempers."

"What, such a bad one as the second burgomaster's!" exclaimed Bender.

"Come, come, brother Oppenheim and friend Ludwig, no bickering, no bickering," said Hilpaert, stopping the retort which he saw rising in his colleague's throat. "Let us leave that to our heretic enemies in the chapter. We must all pull together—fill one bumper more my friends—and stick to each other closely in the common cause. Now, good Master Syndic, please to unroll your papers, and get your pen out of its case to note down our resolutions. Take seats, my masters, and let's to business."

The burgomaster threw off his Minevar-lined and overlapped cloak as he spoke these words, settled his ruff round his neck with an air of important preparation, pulled down the flaps of his doublet, eased the brass-studded leather belt

which bound his portly waist, and took possession of the stuffed arm-chair at the head of the table. His companions made their respective preparations, and occupied the seats at either side; the taciturn syndic trimming the lamp which stood in the middle, and spreading his writing materials before him.

“ Now, good my friends and fellow-citizens, having all well matured our notions on the great events which are about to burst out in the electorate, this is the final sitting of us, the most worshipful secret committee of the general town council of Cologne, to decide on the measures to be put in force to-morrow, that glorious day which is to see the overthrow of our arch-tyrant, and the consolidation of our rights and privileges as by law established.”

“ Good, good!” cried Bender.

“ Yes, my worthy friend, you are right, it is good,” continued the burgomaster, warmed by his sycophant’s praise, “ right good to see men resolved to stand by their privileges”—

“And by each other,” observed Zomerhausen.

“Don’t interrupt me, friend Christian!—Resolved to stand and to fall, in upholding the usages and customs of their country, and the—the customs and usages of their forefathers. Never, fellow-citizens, shall it be said that the men of Cologne were backwards in coming forwards in such a mighty cause. Never shall a haughty sovereign, a heretic in his heart and a tyrant in his intentions—let him go to mass ever so regularly, or act for the good of the people ever so much—never shall such a sovereign keep a free people in chains.”

“Excellent good!”

“Hush, Master Bender, and let our chief magistrate finish his luminous speech,” said Oppenheim, with a sneer, which the syndic acknowledged by a wink.

“And now,” resumed Hilpaert, “now that I have opened the business of this our secret and extraordinary sitting, I leave the way clear

for such as wish to follow on the same-side of the question, being resolved to maintain the right of free discussion as long as I have the honour to fill this chair."

"With a most unwieldy mass of flesh and a proportionate explosion of folly," whispered his colleague to the syndic, who thereupon pursed up his lips, and strove to twist them into a sidelong smile.

"Brother Oppenheim, you have, in right of your office, which is only second to my own in dignity, the priority of speech—What have you to say?"

"What have your eloquence and wisdom left me to say, Brother Hilpaert, but that I agree with your sentiments, espouse your opinions, and think the sooner we proceed to business the better?"

"To business! is not this business, may I ask your worshipful respectability? Is it not business to have our minds fixed and our hearts braced up, by the exciting words of his

worship the chief burgomaster ?" asked Ludwig Bender.

" Yes," cried Zomerhausen, who wriggled on his seat with impatience to begin his oration, " I think it is, and business of the right sort too, whatever our worthy second burgomaster may think. And I am bold to say that this is no time for flinching and wavering, when a great blow is to be struck. What ! shall we wait to be crushed altogether by the tyranny that this reforming prelate is letting loose upon us ? Shall we suffer innovation to sap our foundations, and have our venerable institutions pulled about our ears ? Shall we allow this elector to have our children taught more than we know ourselves, to fasten down the rising generation to desks and benches, and encourage them to laugh at us and their other ancestors, for our ignorance of the new-fangled trash that they are to be crammed with ? Did our fathers, or our grandfathers, or their grandfathers know how to read or write, eh ? and did not the

world wag as well in their days as in our's? Did it not always go round? Have Guttenberg, Fust, or Schoeffer with all their types and presses changed its course? Then shall we, the notables of this great city, stand quiet while we are shoved from our seats by the raff and rubbish we have so long ruled over? Must our delightful banquets be opened to every hungry citizen who has hitherto only had the privilege of paying the bill? Why should our old established customs be changed? What harm do we do to any one by holding fast to the rights which were handed down to us by our progenitors? We are told by this tyrant sovereign of ours that we owe a debt to posterity. Indeed! What did posterity ever lend us? In which of your books, my fellow-citizens, is posterity to be found at the credit side? But let me tell you, my friends, that we are posterity. Perhaps you never thought of that. Yes, we are posterity, and we will in our justice do for our posterity what our an-

cestors in their wisdom did for their's—that is for us.—We will stick to our old customs, and our vested rights, and our holy religion, and leave an example behind us, like those who went before us, for those who come after us, and who shall never overtake us, if we can prevent them from treading on our heels! And now, most worshipful chief burgomaster, I have finished."

"Good Master Syndic, have you taken down the words of my own and the other worthy committee-men's speeches?" asked Hil-paert.

"The sense, not the exact words, your worship."

"So, Master Syndic, you'll be indicted under the new reform for holding a sinecure," said Oppenheim in an under tone, giving at the same time a nudge with his elbow to his learned neighbour; and the latter displayed a contortion of countenance thereat.

"I beg your worship's pardon," said Zomer-

hausen, starting up again, as though he had just found some loose-scattered memoranda on his brain—"I forgot, that is to say I left out, or omitted, or as one may say put aside an observation, which is, I may venture to flatter myself, of some importance to this great question. I therefore take leave to remark that we must—we ought—that is we are bound to hold fast to our rights and privileges—and that the dues, duties, tolls, and taxes, which we levy by immemorial prescription on the citizens, are as much our corporate property, as the blessed impost of tithes is that of the holy church, or the private domains of those pestilent innovators Nuenar, Wissemburg, Kriechlingen and the rest are their proper possessions, and that any, the least attempt at composition, commutation, or reduction, such as is contemplated by the heretical tyrant who for the time rules over us is sacrilege and treason—"

"So think I," said Hilpaert.

"And I," chimed in Bender.

"—Is sacrilege and treason to our corporate immunities," continued Zomerhausen, "and I would moreover impress on ye all, my worthy fellow-citizens and fellow-labourers in the great good cause of conservatism, on ye all I say, that we are as may be said posterity, and that we ought in justice to do for our posterity, what our ancestors in their wisdom did for their posterity—"

"Methinks, good Christian, you said that before," remarked Oppenheim, drily.

"No matter if he did, worthy colleague—a good thing may be said twice over, to stimulate our honourable zeal in the holy cause of conservatism," said Hilpaert.

"Which the elector and his reforming gang have the ferocious insolence to call monopoly and abuse," added Oppenheim, in a tone which seemed to insinuate that the coarse sense of the rough and sarcastic burgher admitted the truth of the imputation he affected to repudiate.

" And for which reason," said Hilpaert, consequentially, " we are all resolved as one man to overthrow and drive out the arch profligate and his noxious crew—and it is therefore the decision and decree of this secret and extraordinary committee that the rising of the people *does* take place to-morrow — which means this blessed day of St. Urban, May the 25th, *Anno Domine, 1579*—for it is now near one o'clock in the morning—and that the negotiation already opened some hours agone by our secret agent with the mercenaries of Liegnitz be carried into effect as soon as the officer deputed to treat with us arrives—and *potz tausend!* why is he not here already ? and that our old allegiance is hereby and henceforward declared forfeited and null, and our new fidelity to be on the spot pledged to his Highness Ernest of Bavaria, Prince-bishop of Liege, our sovereign elector that is to be, from this time forth —and so, kind Master Syndic, if thou hast already inscribed these our solemn resolutions,

let's all now sign—for his highness the bishop will not much longer tarry: and he our secret agent, known only to his highness the bishop and to me as head of the corporation, whose name let no man ask for, must soon be here. Is all ready for signing?"

"The heads are all down, your worship."

"That's just what our tyrant would like to be able to say of the town-council, Master Syndic."

"Aha, aha! good, good, your worship!" was Ludwig Bender's very original commentary on this somewhat unseasonable joke of the burgomaster.

"Now my worshipful masters, take the pen and sign, so please ye," said the syndic.

"There is my cross," said Hilpaert, putting his mark.

"And mine," added Oppenheim.

"So, that stands for me, Ludwig Bender."

"And there is the token of my consent," exclaimed Zomerhausen, throwing down the

pen which the syndic took up again, to certify the authenticity of the various marks.

"Ah, good syndic," observed Hilpaert, while the learned clerk was writing, "what a lucky thing it is that you are so phlegmatic and philosophical, with all that mass of learning in your head and at your fingers' ends. If we could read and write as you do, what an inflammatory set of fellows we should be! Heaven protect our children and their children from the incendiary designs of those reformers!"

At this moment a knock twice repeated was heard against the iron plate which was nailed to the private door leading from the street to the council-room.

"They are come, they are come, that is the signal," said one of the party. Another called the attendant who dozed away his hour of watch in the anti-room; and in a moment or two more the door was opened, and three individuals entered the chamber. One of these

was, without disguise or concealment, the Ritter Heinrich Von Sweinischen. The other two wore black velvet masks; but one of these was immediately thrown aside, and the naturally harsh, yet affectedly bland and insinuating expression of Ernest of Bavaria's countenance was exposed to the admiring gaze of the party.

CHAPTER XI.

THE citizens received the intriguing prelate with profound humility, that sort of sordid reverence which is too often lavished, even in these enlightened times, on men of rank, and which naturally generates in the latter an over-insolent pride in their own station, and a deep contempt for its idolaters.

"Most gracious and reverend prince," said Hilpaert, "I give your highness welcome and much thanks for your condescension, in the name of the corporate gratitude and fidelity of the town-council of this good city, here at this present time assembled—"

"Represented," whispered Oppenheim.

“ That is to say represented, in the person of myself—the chief magistrate—and those other respectable and enlightened burghers, my good friends and colleagues in the due government of the same. Be it therefore known to your gracious and renowned high-mightiness, that, after due deliberation and sagacious examination we have unanimously resolved in the name of our fellow-citizens leaving to the rest of the electorate to follow our bright example, that our allegiance to the tyrant Ghebhard is from this hour cancelled and void, and is henceforward handed over in full and ample possession to your aforesaid high-mightiness, your heirs”—

“ Successors, friend Johan—his reverence is a bishop and cannot have heirs,” whispered Oppenheim glad of an opportunity of putting his colleague out.

“—Your high-mightiness’s successors—and and—hem! and—so forth, and so forth, and so forth,” babbled the discomposed burgo-

master, who never could recover the broken thread of his labyrinthian orations.

“Excellent good!” exclaimed Bender, coming to his patron’s relief.

“And, gracious and reverend prince,” said Zomerhausen, stepping impatiently forward, “If an humble individual like myself, totally unaccustomed to public speaking”—

“Worthy citizens! and, as I may I trust already call ye, faithful subjects!” said the bishop, promptly placing a dam before the coming flood of eloquence, “I know well your sentiments, and I will not do ye the injustice to require a new expression of them. Pray be seated all, that we may without loss of time consult on the measures required at this critical moment.”

“He might have heard my speech, though,” said Zomerhausen to Oppenheim, in a subdued voice, and with a crest-fallen look, as they each took a chair.

“And not be a bit the wiser, friend Chris-

tian," was the consolatory reply, to which it was impossible to make any retort, for the bishop, in a firm and decided tone, claimed the attention of his listeners to the statement which he rapidly made of the forces he had at hand, and the means by which he meant to put them into motion, to aid the popular movement which was to burst out the same morning, for the dethronement of Ghebhard Truchses, the seizure of his person, and the proclamation of Ernest's accession to the electorate, to be confirmed and solemnized by the concurrence of the plenipotentiaries of both the emperor and the pope, who were provided with all the official documents of ban and anathema for simultaneous promulgation on the occasion.

"And now, my kind friends," continued Bishop Ernest, "this completion of our long labours wants, for a due winding up, only the announcement that this gallant officer, Ritter Heinrich Von Sweinischen, the chief finance minister of his highness, my royal cousin

Prince Henry of Liegnitz, who by a happy dispensation of Providence has opportunely arrived among us at this crisis—this gallant officer, I say, in the name and with the full authority of his royal master, has promptly acceeded to the proposition of this my noble—but for reasons of state—disguised friend, to join the whole force of his levies to our own, renouncing the attempted tampering with his highness's independent and disinterested high principles, already essayed by your arch-enemy, whom we may now call the *late* Elector of Cologne.”

“Long live Ernest of Bavaria!” cried Hilpaert, plunging his goblet into the bowl, which had been replenished by the attendant and of which the bishop had, half haughtily half complaisantly, already refused to partake.

“Ernest for ever!” echoed Bender, drinking deeply.

“Hurra! huzza! huzza! hurra!” shouted the others, each quaffing a bumper the while.

“Hush, hush! prudence, my over-zealous friends!” said the bishop, “the time is not yet come for this heart-gladdening avowal. Some hours hence I hope to hear the streets ringing with your shouts—and I pledge myself in advance to proclaim and preserve to ye—as I have often before promised—all your rights, privileges, and immunities as by law established, and by long usage sanctified, and as originally decreed by the wisdom of your ancestors.”

“Long live our ancestors!” vociferated Hil-paert, with reverential and tipsy enthusiasm, and the others chorussed the cry, while the bishop smiled, Ritter Heinrich twisted his mustachios, and the black mask shook as if the wearer laughed heartily behind it.

“Now, Master Burgomaster, and worthy citizens, listen to the conditions of the Ritter,” said the bishop.

“Conditions!” murmured the burghers with one voice.

“ Yes, gentlemen, conditions. You did not expect that my royal master and a sovereign prince, was to condescend to join the cause of a corporation without a due equivalent ?” exclaimed Ritter Heinrich, with an air of most perfect disdain, for long experience told him the best way of treating with the vulgar and sordid.

“ In such a cause methinks there should be no demur, when the point at stake is to cripple the means of the arch-enemy—the destroyer of your rights, the trampler down of your privileges—the spoliator of your immunities—and to strengthen your own hands for the overthrow of his tyranny,” said the bishop.

“ No, certainly not—by no means—pray, most worshipful Ritter, let us hear the terms proposed for his Highness Prince Henry’s services,” said Hilpaert.

“ Services !” fiercely ejaculated the Ritter—while the bishop cast a dissatisfied glance at the burgomaster, and the man in the velvet

mask started back and threw up his hands with real or feigned surprise.

"Alliance was the word my worthy colleague would have used," remarked Oppenheim.

"Oh, that is quite a different thing!" exclaimed Von Sweinischen.

"Not much difference methinks, Master Syndic if they are to be equally paid for," whispered Oppenheim.

"Umph!" answered the syndic.

"The terms, the terms?" said Hilpaert, with a hiccup composed chiefly of mulled hippocras.

"Speak out, noble cavalier, in the name of your royal master," said the bishop.

"In obedience to the orders of your highness, and in hopes of producing on those worshipful magistrates a due impression of my master's moderation, I proceed to state the conditions on which he graciously condescends to place at their disposal the whole of his imposing force of four thousand gallant veterans, ready to turn the tide of the coming contest; and

with a due and ample recruitment thereof the number may be speedily doubled, tripled, or quadrupled—”

“At our expense,” muttered Oppenheim.

“Aye, my master’s or quintupled, so as to guarantee this noble city against any possible attack of the Dutch troops under William of Nassau, of any marauding excursion from the Spanish forces of the Prince of Parma, or from any sudden surprise from the Protestant allies of this tyrant Truchses, who will all be a-foot by and bye, to serve themselves under pretext of aiding him.”

“These are but remote contingencies, Herr Ritter,” stammered Hilpaert, who had still, in spite of the spiced wine, sense and sight enough left to see clearly through that particular species of mist christened since his days mystification.

“Far-off advantages,” said Bender.

“Little-to-be-dreaded dangers,” growled Zommerhausen.

"Nothing but smoke," growled Oppenheim.

"Umph!" exclaimed the syndic.

"But then, my worshipful masters, there is the unmolested navigation of the Rhine to be secured from here to Holland, and from Holland to the sea and thence to—"

"The Antipodes, if we had ships to carry us there and an object in going" said Oppenheim, more briskly than usual. "But in a word, most noble Ritter, what does your master ask for the hire of himself and his men to aid our present purpose, the only one now under consideration?"

"Well then, in a word, and since *hire* is the word you insist on, worshipful sir, a present of ten thousand crowns to himself, five thousand to be distributed among his officers, a largess of as many more to his men, and free quarters, good rations, and reasonable pay for the whole of his legion from this day forth during the continuance of the war."

"A most disinterested and magnanimous prince," snarled Oppenheim.

"Very!" stammered Hilpaert; while the rest of the party stared in astonishment at those exorbitant demands.

"Gentlemen, my royal master's sword may turn the balance just now—and both scales are open," said the Ritter.

"True, and it seems that the highest bidder may make either kick the beam," replied Oppenheim. "But in this case a little time for deliberation must be allowed. Give us an hour, Ritter, and we shall decide, and duly return you our final answer. In the meantime we have mighty things on hand. The various sections of the city will be early a-foot, and much is to be done by sunrise. My worthy colleague here seems inclined to doze."

"Not at all," said Hilpaert, bouncing up, "I am ready for action—I shall but return to my wife for an hour, to set matters to right, and then——"

“ You will be as ready as ever to do wrong,” was Oppenheim’s half-audible commentary.

“ Then, worthy friend, you will proceed from family to public duty, like a giant refreshed,” said the bishop, giving into the humour of his citizen supporters, and himself elated to the highest pitch by the near approach of what he had long reckoned on as an assured and easy triumph. In his many stolen visits to Cologne, which from the devotion of the town-magistrates to his cause, were matters of no risk or difficulty, he had satisfied himself that the moment the explosion was to take place the authority of Truchses would be overthrown. In the whole city the latter had but few partisans, and those only among the liberal and protestant party in the chapter, formed of the aristocracy of the city and neighbourhood. The besotted people were almost all against him, worked on by the numerous and bigotted clergy, and supported in their hatred and hostility to their sovereign by every possible argument addressed to their

prejudices and their cupidity. The Bishop of Liege held at its true value the promised assistance of Liegnitz's half-formed and widely-scattered legion. He knew that Von Swetnichen asked too much, but he was also convinced that he would abate in his demand, and he cared little how much the rich citizens, his anticipated subjects, were mulcted for the object of depriving the rival he wanted to supplant of what might turn out after all a troublesome acquisition to either friends or foes. He had readily admitted to his presence, at the secret rendezvous where his adherents were assembled, the Ritter Heinrich, who had been with such apparent facility won over to listen to the overtures of the secret agent by whom he was introduced to the bishop.

Need we tear the mask off that secret agent's face? No, our readers will admit that we have not attempted to throw any mystery over the unmitigated rascalities of Jerome Scotus. The following cōversation took place between him

and his reverend and all but royal employer, when they quitted the town house and wended their way towards one of the city-gates, having left the five members of the secret committee to debate on the Ritter's proposal, and left him free to follow whatever employment he chose to seek during the hour demanded for deliberation, at the expiration of which he was to return for his answer.

"Heaven be praised, we have now a moment for free converse, count! I am beyond reach of the wine-flavoured flattery of those coarse burghers, and you need not wear a mask either on your face or your thoughts. Tell me then the particulars of Ghebhard's last scene of ruin, for you have assured me it is consummated," said the bishop.

"To your highness's heart's content; at day-break he will be bound fast to a wife, and as closely wedded to utter destruction," replied Scotus, coolly.

"Madman and renegade at once! How well

you must have worked on him, my unrivalled friend, my right arm in this great enterprise ! How your deepest depths of knowledge must have been fathomed ! Can I ever repay this wondrous service ?”

“ In truth, your highness, 'tis not amiss that the thought of remuneration should pass across your brain, for methinks the hour of my reward is fairly come.”

“ So think I, my valued friend, and you shall not find me ungrateful. When once my hated rival is fairly netted——”

“ He is so now. He and the whole of that pestilent crew of Mansfeldts, brought together into his palace by no small labour on my part—Nuenar, Kriechlingen, all to a man, in short, of your most dangerous enemies, are now entrapped and only waiting to be crushed by one blow.”

“ But Truchses has not yet actually set the seal on his perdition by his final act of apostacy.—You promised me, Count Scotus,

that you would see him married, out of the pale of possible redemption, under the very ban of civil and religious vengeance. This has not yet come to pass."

"Nor shall it, I fairly tell your highness, till I am settled with and amply paid. Need I boast that I have some knowledge of the minds of men? or add that I have known some who falter and break down on the very last step of their most important undertakings? Good faith is a grand quality between associates in any enterprise, and your highness will allow that our's has been no common one."

"Dear count, respected friend, invaluable ally, what would these words express?"

"Precisely what I feel, and have felt for some time past, your highness—that you do not come to the point—that I have done my duty in your cause, well and with eminent success, and that I expect on the spot, peremptorily but most respectfully, the full measure of my reward and of your promise."

“ It is just, it is just, the labourer is worthy of his hire—but how is it possible now, in this hour of confusion and intricacy to comply with this demand for prompt payment? There are no writing-materials at hand, of fitting sort for the document I would willingly draw up, to pledge myself legally—since it seems you have doubts of my honourable and princely word—”

“ Heaven forfend! your highness cannot surely suspect me of such irreverence—but these are times of peril ; to-day’s doings may bring many a head to earth ; Truchses and his followers may become desperate—a sacriligeous hand might dare to strike even Heaven’s anointed and the people’s choice——”

“ What do you say, count? You do not think there will be any resistance? Surely the unanimity of the citizens in my favour and the help of my own people scattered in the guise of peasants and artizans through the towns, with the aid of those fierce reitres—Would to God those stupid burghers had come in at once to

the terms of that captain!— All this *must* secure our cause against the possibility of failure? You think so, don't you? You have made your calculations?"

"Yes, your highness, I am sure of it—I have made my calculations—but a random blow, a shot from an arquebuss, a stone thrown, the falling of a tile might baffle them all."

"I am *almost* thinking, my dear and valued count, that I had better not myself appear till everything is over and settled, that it would perhaps be more dignified for me to return to Liege and wait awhile."

"Your highness had better not think that *downright*, lest the notion get possession of your better reason and run away with it. Your highness surely does not want nerve to go through with the adventure you have embarked in? Better, if so, never to have trusted yourself in a revolution, where personal courage is the first virtue and the surest element of success."

"Count Scotus, you do me wrong," said the bishop, stopping, and in a voice if not actually stern at least firm; "I am neither a coward, nor a promise-breaker. Nor am I of that reckless temperament that throws the goods of life and life itself into a thousand vulgar and ignoble risks; caution is an instinct with me, even were it not a principle! 'Tis in my nature, and without its ample exercise this long wrought plan might have never come to a head. The not-to-be-avoided chances of failure I, like all players for a great stake, have made up my account for, but you will at least allow I reduced them to the lowest point in seeking you out, and bringing you from far to be my chief auxiliary and constant counsellor."

"And I served you well, from the first moment of our engagement up to this which is nearly the last. Be steady then as well as cautious; act honestly for my sake and boldly for your own. All is not yet over."

After this reply the bishop walked silently

on, guided by his companion. After they had proceeded some time, the former as if rousing from a reverie started and spoke.

“Where are we going, count?” said he, looking around him in the gloom. “It seems to me as though we wandered from our path to the rendezvous.”

“Trust to me, your highness; I know the road.”

“It is well; I do trust you. And now, Count Scotus, I have been thinking that were it possible to procure pen and ink, and paper, such as suits the usages of my rank, I could at once appease your doubts, if any exist, as to my fair intentions towards you, by giving you a draft on my treasurer at Liege, for prompt payment of a sum that will, I think, nobly satisfy your expectations, however short it may fall of your high deserts. What say you?”

“That I am quite satisfied with your highness’s better thoughts, and that there is a place at hand, with every requisite to meet your generous intentions.”

“ Then lead me to it.”

They had not proceeded far when they met a person on horseback, leading another steed, both furnished with saddle-bags as if prepared for a journey. The bishop turned his head aside to avoid observation, and stepped briskly forward. Looking round in a moment more for his companion, he saw him evidently speaking to the person on horseback ; and he heard a murmured phrase of Italian, but he could not distinguish the words nor judge who was the speaker.

“ Your highness’s pardon !” exclaimed Scotus, as he came forward, “ we are near the place I spoke of.”

“ Are you known to that passer-by, good count ?”

“ My mask is not, your highness.”

“ You spoke Italian ?”

“ Perhaps I did, but what of that ?”

“ Oh ! nothing, but that it sounded oddly.”

“ To hear a man speak his native language ?

Beware of suspicion—or at least of betraying

its existence. Your highness's instinct of caution may degenerate if you do not watch it closely. Now we are arrived; I pray your highness to enter—I follow."

This timely hint to the bishop's pride or his prudence produced its full effect. Without an instant's hesitation he entered the wicket, which Scotus held in his hand; the latter immediately followed and closed the gate; and the bishop found himself in the garden where the reader has been already more than once. The Bishop of Liege was right in the estimate of his own character. He did not quite want courage. He could at times be almost a brave man—but was too cautious to be ever a bold one. In the present instance he felt that, be his doubts or his suspicions what they might, it would be madness to let them sink into fear. Had the night not been so dark his keen-eyed companion might have discovered that the bishop's cheek was pale. But neither his step nor his mind faltered, as the

Italian led the way through the oft-threaded intricacies of the palace-garden. At length he reached a low vestibule, opened a door, and passed into a narrow corridor where a lamp was a-light. In a moment more he and his reverend and princely follower were in Scotus's own apartment.

"And now, Count Scotus, may I ask where am I?" said the bishop, looking around with a scrutinizing yet not a timid gaze.

"In the electoral palace," answered the Italian, fixing a glance meant to probe deeper than the mere expression of the inquirer's face. A convulsive movement of the shoulders and hands, a quick frown, and a moment's opening of the mouth were the only discoverable evidences of emotion. Whether the bishop's heart leaped or sank was not to be known.

"And for what purpose?" asked he, with a calm and haughty tone.

"Merely to give your highness all facilities for drawing up the document you spoke of."

“ Ha, ha, ha !” said the bishop, with a faint smile, and a not ill-feigned ease of manners, “ this is indeed taking possession somewhat before my time. What would my rival say were he to know that I am going to sign the reward for his ruin on his own table !”

“ He would ratify the deed, and call it a gratuity for having secured his happiness.”

“ Well, well, that is matter of opinion—but let me do the work which brought us here, for the sooner we finish this frolic the better. Is egress as easy as ingress, count ?”

“ That—like most things—depends on circumstances, your highness. Here are materials for writing such as are in all ways worthy of you ;” and with these words Scotus opened an escrutoire, and placed a chair before it. The bishop took possession ; and wrote with a hurried pen, which he meant to make an excuse for a not over-steady hand.

“ Now count, as to the sum ? what say you ? You know I never specified any particular

amount as that which you were to be entitled to for this service."

"I think your highness once said, some ten days back, something as to your considering fifty thousand crowns not a too high price for the assistance I was even then affording you."

"Did I? then I will now put a hundred thousand into the treasury order. Are you satisfied, count?"

"Quite so, even if it pleases your highness to write but *one* and leave out the *hundred*."

The bishop now smiled in earnest, at the Italian's pretended disinterestedness and at the pleasant conviction that he was completely outwitting that arch impostor. The fact was that the sovereign's order on the public treasury of the principality of Liege was not worth a groschen without the counter-signature of a minister, and a particular seal of office, but would, on the contrary, render any one presenting it for payment subject to instant arrestation. Had

the bishop written a draft on the private intendant of his own personal funds or private possessions the matter had been different, and it had been instantly paid to any produceable amount.

The bishop steadily signed his name, and affixed a seal stamped by his own signet-ring which he carried about him, and he dated the document, at Scotus's suggestion, and himself enjoying the addition to what he considered all through a good joke, "from our electoral palace of Cologne."

"Truly, Count Scotus, no sovereign's escruoire could be better supplied with paper of rare device and wax of right royal brilliancy and odour; and as surely may I add that no sovereign sign-manual or signet was ever applied with greater pleasure to a secret rescript. Take it, then, and keep it till the day comes when it may suit you to act on this document, and receive the recompense of your high and honourable service."

"The day has almost come, your highness, for I see it beginning to glimmer above the tree-tops in the garden; and I could not pay so ungracious a return for your gracious intentions as to let them linger unfulfilled."

With these words Scotus placed the paper carefully within his doublet's folds. The bishop rose, and casting some rapid looks around the room, in which various articles of dress, open trunks, books, and scientific instruments were scattered in disorder, he moved towards the door by which he had entered, and with as much composure as he could command, he proposed retreating from the palace which the announced approach of daylight made now a thousand-fold more disagreeable than before.

"Your highness cannot surely believe that I have merely brought you here for the poor selfishness of securing for myself the execution of this paper? no, I have had a higher purpose in view. Having received the title to an over-generous reward for my poor services, I would

now convince you, by the evidence of your own ears at least, that our joint object is attained. Look here," continued Scotus, raising the tapestry, and opening a small door, "this narrow passage leads up directly to the partition wall of Ghebhard's most private apartment. It is unknown to him even ; but I was not as many hours in these quarters as I have since been days, when I discovered it, and I have since, you may well believe, turned it to good account."

"I am satisfied you have—but now let us quickly retire—I want no further demonstration of the success of your efforts—come, come!"

"Hush ! hark ! yes, there they are in full conclave—The brothers, Nuenar, the old heretic Spangenberg, all ready for the solemnization of the marriage, if not in the very ceremony. Hist, your highness ! would it not be exquisite to listen to your rival pronouncing, as it were, the very sentence of his ruin and your triumph ?

Let's hearken a moment in this passage—there is time enough for retreat without discovery—all are too much occupied and too full of their false security to cross our path. Go on, go on a little more," continued Scotus as the bishop unable to resist his curiosity and afraid of appearing to fear, entered the cavity, "there is no obstacle to your advance. But be cautious, make no noise—scarcely breathe—every sound is audible through the partition."

"I hear nothing," whispered the bishop.

"They have ceased speaking for a moment—go closer to the wall," said Scotus; and as the former followed his directions, he withdrew briskly from the little passage, closed the door, turned the key, and took it from the lock, leaving the imprisoned prelate to ruminate at his leisure on the near connexion between caution and cunning, and the risk which is ran, by the nervous dread of seeming afraid leading to acts of manifest temerity.

Scotus paused for a moment in the middle of

the chamber, and surveyed hastily the quantity of various property scattered about.

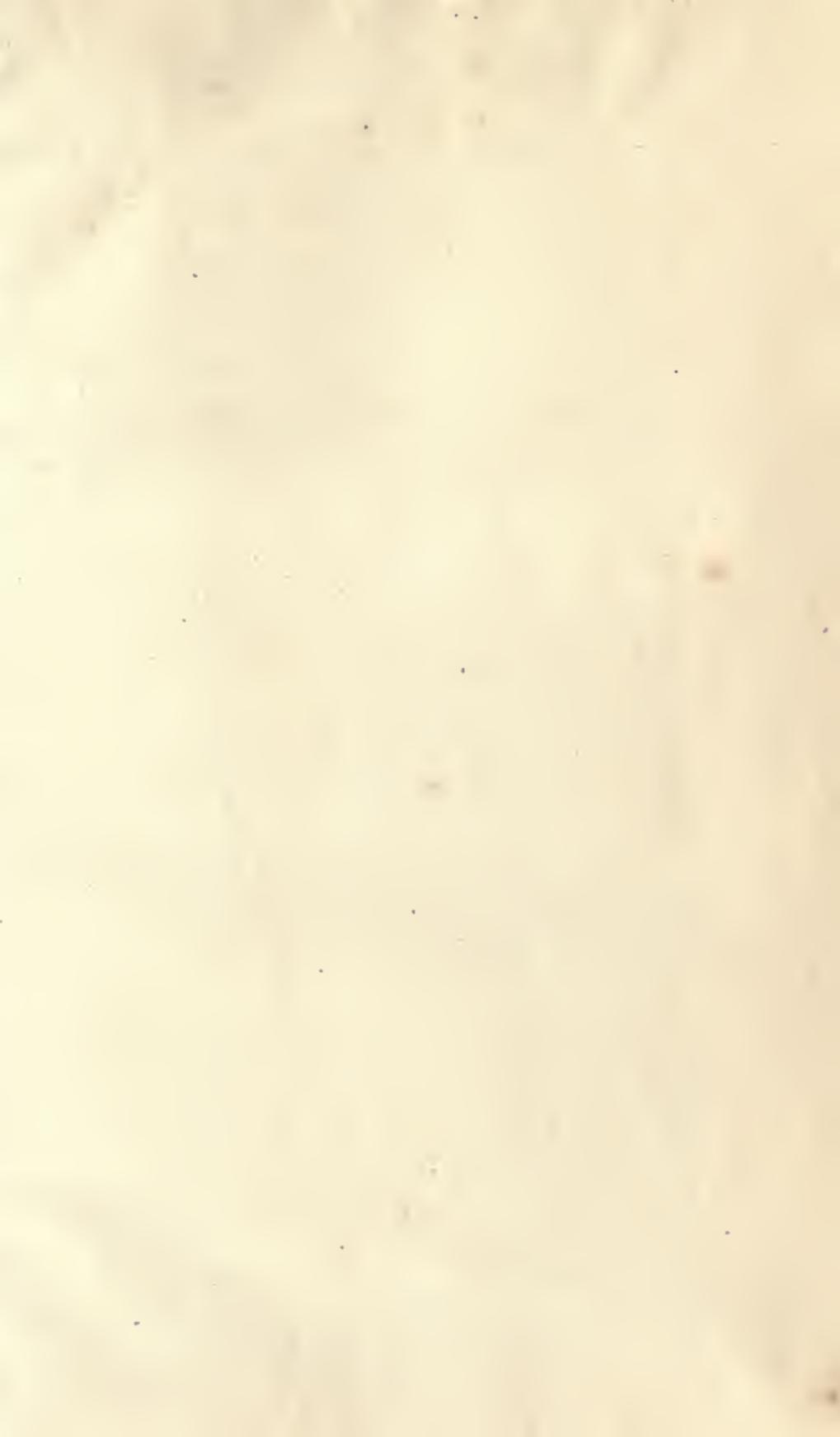
“ Rich garments, valuable books, instruments of price,” said he “ it does grieve me to leave any of ye behind ! Even at this moment of immense wealth, the avaricious stir of nature is in my heart for the merest trifle I possess. But am I one of those who would risk a great possession for a greedy passion ? No, I am grown wiser than nature made me, otherwise I had lived for nought. Am I not a great man ? Two powerful prelates, princes, potentates, my dupes in one short night ! Is not the power of knowledge and the knowledge of power a glorious possession ? Adieu, magnanimous rivals ! I leave ye both in your common palace—to one a prison to the other a paradise—and little, oh how little ! do I care whether fate turns it, for either or for both, into a heaven or a hell !”

His soliloquy over, he stole gently from his apartment, left the doors open, passed through

the garden, and soon overtook Imogen, who waited at an appointed place with the fleet and high-spirited horses. Scotus mounted on one of them, and with his companion close by his side, he quickly passed through the city-gates, being provided with a certificate of surety, a passport, and all papers necessary for his comings and goings to and fro between the electoral city and the territory of Liege, towards which direction he was far on his route before the sun had risen above the earth's visible edge.

END OF VOL. II.

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